



Commissioning Human Capacity: Stakeholder and Visitor Perceptions of the Development, Use, and Conservation of Meals Hill Recreation Area



Parks and People, LLC

Dr. W. Hunter Holland, Owner
Dr. Kathleen K. Holland, Owner

November 2020

Acknowledgement

We would like to express our deepest appreciation to all Valdez community members and stakeholders for their invested efforts in sharing their vision for the development of Meals Hill.

We would like to thank Nick Farline (City of Valdez Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Director) and City of Valdez Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Department staff for their service to this project. Your invested efforts allowed a diverse representation of stakeholder visions to be included in the data collection process and was irreplaceable in our interpretation of information.

Furthermore, we would like to thank our fellow Meals Hill Master Plan team members Holly Spoth-Torres and Bri Keifer (Huddle), Brian Meissner (ECI Architects), and Christine Byl and Gabe Travis (Interior Trails) for their input and collaboration.

Commissioning Human Capacity: Stakeholder and Visitor Perceptions on the Development, Use, and Conservation of Meals Hill Recreation Area

Executive Summary

Meals Hill is 184 acres of public land located near the Valdez Ferry Terminal in Valdez, AK. The land is permanently protected by a conservation easement, ensuring it will remain open to the public for recreation and that its valuable wildlife habitat will remain undeveloped. The Meals Hill property is a significant landmark with environmentally diverse habitat, and it has the potential to be a recreational destination for the City of Valdez.

In addition to its environmental significance, Meals Hill holds a rich historical significance for the City of Valdez. Likely utilized by Alaska Native Chugach and Ahtna tribes, Meals Hill has contributed to the development of Valdez since the 1898 gold rush.

In November 2019, the Great Land Trust purchased the property from The Port Valdez Company using Exxon Valdez Oil Spill (EVOS) Trustee Council funds and subsequently transferred the land to the City of Valdez. In accordance with the conservation easement, the City plans to transform Meals Hill into a non-motorized recreational area for community members, visitors, and all stakeholders. In order to proceed in a manner that addresses stakeholder needs, visions, and concerns, this project was initiated to gather and interpret critical input.

Project Methods

Data collection occurred between August 10th and October 18th of 2020. This study utilized mixed-method interviews and surveys to investigate stakeholders' and visitors' visions, desired uses, and preferences regarding the development of Meals Hill as a new community park. Surveys and interview scripts were designed by, and oriented around, 5 guiding themes developed by members of the Valdez Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Department and Meals Hill Master Plan Development Team. These themes included:

Theme 1: What, if any, is the significance of Meals Hill for Stakeholders?

Theme 2: What are the desired uses of Meals Hill?

Theme 3: What are users' preferences in the development of Meals Hill?

Theme 4: What does short and long-term success look like in the development of Meals Hill?

Theme 5: What degree of support exists regarding the development of Meals Hill?

Sampling and Data Collection Plan

Surveys were administered in electronic and physical-form. A broad range of distribution methods were integrated to ensure a diverse stakeholder and visitor sample. A survey link was shared via the Meals Hill Master Plan Development webpage, 2,025 postcards delivered in community members' post-office boxes, public radio broadcasts, poster-style advertisements displayed at the community theater, local symposium announcements, phone calls to visitor agencies, hard copy surveys were placed in the Civic Center and Visitors' Bureau, among other methods.

Interviews included community stakeholders (i.e. community members, individuals employed in Valdez, season visitors, past residents) and visitor organization representatives. Each interview was conducted over the phone and focused on gaining a richer understanding of users' preferences in, beliefs in the significance of, and areas of concerns regarding the development of Meals Hill. Interviews continued until researchers achieved saturation in the information provided by interviewees and no new themes were identified.

Summary of Results

Stakeholders' Degree of Support Regarding the Development of Meals Hill

Stakeholders overwhelmingly support the development of Meals Hill and expressed excitement about the potential of the property as a non-motorized recreational use area. Seventy-three percent support additional development for non-motorized recreational opportunities, 18% support the improvement of existing infrastructure and only 9% of respondents do not support any development.

The Significance of Meals Hill for Stakeholders

Stakeholders shared a vision of Meals Hill as an exciting opportunity to establish a public image of Valdez with accessible nature-based recreation opportunities within close proximity of town. Stakeholders view Meals Hill as having the potential to provide a unique identity to Valdez for both stakeholders and visitors. When asked what makes Meals Hill special to stakeholders, scenic views (50%), close proximity to town (35%), and opportunities to engage in nature (32%) were indicated most frequently.

Regarding the significance of Meals Hill for the City of Valdez, stakeholders most frequently indicated opportunities to recreate in nature (43%). During interviews, stakeholders explained this significance further stating the importance of moderate to easy-difficulty outdoor recreation opportunities (e.g. mountain biking, snow shoeing; 81%), opportunities to experience undeveloped nature (56%), and an opportunity to attract visitors (50%). Historic and cultural significance was not significantly mentioned by stakeholders. However, the expressed vision of Meals Hill indicates a desire for it to be incorporated into the existing and future culture of the city.

Desired Uses of Meals Hill

Stakeholders ranked desired uses for Meals Hill in the following order: (1) Community access (2) Conservation (3) Education opportunities (4) Visitor access and (5) Economic. Regarding recreational desires, hiking (73%), nature viewing (69%), snow shoeing (55%), wildlife viewing (53%), and mountain biking (50%) were indicated as desired uses to be prioritized in development. Conversely, though more than 70% of stakeholders indicated that they do not currently participate in mountain biking, about 50% of stakeholders feel it should be a priority for development.

Stakeholders value solitude and indicated a high degree of acceptability in encountering little to no other users when recreating on Meals Hill. Stakeholders were not supportive of overnight camping on the property.

Stakeholder preferences for the development of Meals Hill include the following:

- Opportunities for community recreation (e.g. Mtn. biking trails, hiking, ice climbing) 81% Stakeholder Interview Data (SI)
- Opportunities to engage in nature 56% SI
- Avoiding overcrowding 31% SI
- Connectivity to other trails 31% SI
- Informative signs (wildlife, trail maps, emergency info) 25% SI
- Multi use trails 25% SI
- Connectivity to town
- Accessible opportunities (inclusivity and kid friendly options)
- Proper maintenance and cleanliness

Stakeholders also ranked park elements by importance. The following elements were noted as important by stakeholders (In order of importance):

- Trash and recycling bins
- Moderate length trails 1.5 – 3 miles
- Kid friendly options
- Allowing pets on trails
- Others indicated as important: access to waterfront, signs along trails

Stakeholders do not think overnight camping, opportunities for large groups, a parking lot or overnight camping are important in the development of Meals Hill.

Ensuring Success

Understanding stakeholders and using their input to plan, develop, and manage Meals Hill is critical to ensure the property is developed in a manner that serves the community. Stakeholders in Valdez expressed a range of environmental values. The most common values were based on experiences held in nature, the beauty of nature, and the ability to control natural environments in order to be safe and convenient for recreation. Meals Hill has the potential to support all of these values as it can provide meaningful experiences in nature and is positioned in a way that will have iconic scenic viewing opportunities. Management will have to focus on a safe and comfortable experience for recreationists to fully meet the needs and desires of

stakeholders.

Though excited about and widely supportive of the development of Meals Hill, stakeholders indicated a range of concerns. Sustainability concerns, particularly lack of long-term plan (desire for planning in phases), maintenance costs, motorized user on property, or concerns of “modernizing Valdez” were indicated by 74% of respondents. Ecological concerns including degradation, over clearing, disturbing animal habitats, fire hazards, human wildlife interactions were indicated by 48% of stakeholder respondents. Finally, user concerns including trash, crowding, taboo rec, dog waste were indicated by 34% of respondents.

Challenges that stakeholders face in pursuing nature-based recreational activities are also critical to consider in the planning and management of Meals Hill. A lack of recreation opportunities (e.g. mountain biking trails, loop trails, trails accessing alpine, kayak launches, wildlife viewing areas; 9%), accessibility (e.g. physical ability required, uneven terrain, availability of places to rest; 7%), and poor maintenance (e.g. drainage issues, over-growth, damage from motorized users; 7%) were the most frequently indicated challenges.

Visitors to Valdez will also play a role in the success of Meals Hill and the benefits it can provide to the city as a whole. Visitors indicated that their main motivations for visiting Valdez included seeing natural scenery (67%), seeing wildlife (55%), and opportunities to recreate in nature (51%). Because Meals Hill meets all of these, it has the potential to make Valdez an even more desirable destination for visitors.

Influential elements that would encourage visitors to participate in nature-based recreation once in Valdez include (In order of influence):

- Opportunities for scenic views
- Easy access to trails
- Chance of seeing wildlife
- Quick recreational opportunities (3 hours or less)
- Clear signage directing visitors

Meals Hill is a unique opportunity in that it can provide all of the listed influential elements. Its proximity to town will make it an accessible and available opportunity to visitors and its opportunities for potential wildlife viewing and scenic views will undoubtedly attract visitors to Valdez. The most common barriers and challenges indicated by visitors were transportation, information, and time restrictions. The location of Meals Hill will allow it to be easily accessible to visitors, well known, and an experience they can engage in with limited amounts of time.

Planning and Management Implications

Meals Hill has the potential to be developed in a manner that serves all stakeholders. Thoughtful and strategic planning and management are critical to ensuring its success. The results presented in this report should guide the planning process, development and management of Meals Hill. Based on the information gained from stakeholder and visitor input, the following planning and management implications should be considered:

Planning Implications

- Meals Hill is significant to its stakeholders because of its potential to be an icon in Valdez and to shape the public image of the city. Its proximity to town and astounding beauty are rare, even in scenic and iconic Alaskan destinations. Planning of the site must ensure that it will serve as a source of community pride by showcasing views and ensuring easy access from town for all users.
- Some community members are not aware of, or do not have adequate information explaining, the conservation easement in place that will limit development of Meals Hill. Therefore, there are community members who have a vision of Meals Hill that is not possible (e.g., residential development, high end hotel development). Strategic communication should be initiated in the community to make information regarding the conservation easement and development restrictions available to more community members. Additionally, interpretive information should be available on site to explain conservation goals and restrictions to development and activities.
- Results indicated a low tolerance for crowding and a desire for solitude. Combined with high predicted use, these results indicate a need for several “peak experiences” rather than one summit on Meals Hill. Trails should be designed to showcase the beauty of the area and each option should include an opportunity for scenic views. The design of trails should not lead to one “peak experience”, rather multiple opportunities for novel experiences should be available to disperse visitors and protect opportunities for solitude.
- Stakeholders indicated that they want a natural experience while recreating at Meals Hill but that trails should be well maintained. Planning should design for natural trails ideal for upkeep and maintenance.

- Planning and development of Meals Hill **should**:
 - Include opportunities for scenic views
 - Prioritize moderate length trails (1.5-3 miles)
 - Allow pets
 - Prioritize family friendly recreational experiences (considerations should be given to degree of difficulty, accessibility (all ages and ability levels, strollers, etc.), incorporate areas for breaks or activities (avoid narrow trails with few stopping points))
- Planning and development of Meals Hill **should not**:
 - Prioritize opportunities for overnight camping
 - Prioritize development of a parking lot
 - Prioritize planning for large groups
- Different user groups hold unique preferences in regards to trail length and other important park characteristics. Development should consider these diverse preferences.
- Accessibility should be considered in planning and development of Meals Hill. Considerations for inclusivity should be integrated while planning rather than later during the management process. These trails should include hard-packed and level terrain. A trail experience that is accessible to all and includes an opportunity for a scenic view should be designed.
- Visitors value a chance to see wildlife in their choice of recreational activities. Signs that inform visitors of native wildlife in the area can increase excitement and desire to recreate at Meals Hill.
- Stakeholders' responses were analyzed in numerous ways (e.g. data separated by age, gender, years of residency, frequency of trail use, among others). While unique preferences and desired uses for certain groups were identified, no significant differences were identified between stakeholders born in Valdez and those who relocated to Valdez for alternative reasons (e.g. employment, outdoor recreation, education, etc.).

Management Implications

- Results from stakeholder and visitor surveys predict very high use of Meals Hill once developed. This is due to its location (both proximity to town and water) and the scenic views it provides which were identified as contributing factors to selection of recreation areas by stakeholders. Further, Meals Hill stakeholders value the natural environment because of the experiences it provides and its beauty. Meals Hill will fit the value systems of its stakeholders provided it is maintained and conserved.
- Mineral Creek was indicated as the most used trail system in Valdez due to its ability to meet recreational needs and its proximity to residents and stakeholders. Meals Hill has the potential to also meet these needs and could therefore lower use of Mineral Creek by dispersing recreational use of visitors between the two trail systems.
- When considering use of trails, results from this study predict potential for conflicts between user groups particularly for use of trails. To address this, management teams may consider designated times or days for prioritization of particular activities. For example, Thursday and Friday from 12-4pm could be identified as mountain bike priority times where hikers can expect more mountain bike use and may choose to avoid hiking.
- Trail etiquette was indicated as a concern and, if not addressed, could lead to dissatisfaction with recreational experiences at Meals Hill. Management should include frequent inspections by park staff to ensure trail etiquette expectations are being adhered to and interventions (education, announcements, signs, etc.) should be implemented to quickly address issues that may occur as use increases over time.
- Visitors indicated a lack of information as a barrier to participation in nature-based recreation. Therefore, the city should focus on marketing opportunities to recreate at Meals Hill through visitor organizations. Further, clear signage including distances or time commitments will make activities more accessible to visitors or those new to the property.
- As use of Meals Hill increases, follow up data collection should be conducted to ensure that the property is meeting needs and expectations of stakeholders. Follow up research should be conducted at minimum 5 year intervals to ensure changes, needs, and preference are identified and met by the management team.

This page intentionally left blank

Table of Contents

| | Page |
|--|------|
| Executive Summary | iii |
| Project Methods | iii |
| Sampling and Data Collection Plan | iv |
| Summary of Results | v |
| Stakeholders’ Degree of Support Regarding the Development of Meals Hill..... | v |
| The Significance of Meals Hill for Stakeholders..... | v |
| Desired Uses of Meals Hill | v |
| Ensuring Success | vi |
| Planning and Management Implications..... | viii |
| Planning Implications | viii |
| Management Implications..... | x |
| Table of Contents | xii |
| List of Tables | xiv |
| List of Figures | xvi |
| Introduction: Need and Background..... | 1 |
| Overarching Purpose and Current Project Objectives | 2 |
| Project Methods | 3 |
| Survey Development..... | 3 |
| Incentive for Stakeholders and Visitors to Complete Survey | 3 |
| Interview Script Development | 3 |
| Sampling and Data Collection Plan | 4 |
| Analysis of Data..... | 5 |
| Project Results | 6 |
| Number of Respondents..... | 6 |
| Stakeholder Data | 6 |
| Understanding Meals Hill Stakeholders | 6 |
| Stakeholders’ Use of Valdez Trails | 12 |
| Stakeholders’ Environmental and Tourism Values | 13 |
| Stakeholders’ Familiarity with Meals Hill..... | 20 |
| Stakeholders’ Degree of Support Regarding the Development of Meals Hill..... | 21 |
| Stakeholders’ Beliefs in the Significance of Meals Hill | 21 |
| Stakeholders’ Desired Uses, and Preferences for the Development, of Meals Hill | 24 |
| Stakeholders’ Concerns Held and Challenges Experienced | 39 |

Table of Contents Continued

| | Page |
|--|------|
| Visitor Survey Data..... | 47 |
| Understanding Valdez Visitors | 47 |
| Visitors’ Participation in Nature-Based Recreation..... | 52 |
| Summary of Results | 57 |
| Stakeholders’ Degree of Support Regarding the Development of Meals Hill..... | 57 |
| The Significance of Meals Hill for Stakeholders..... | 57 |
| Desired Uses of Meals Hill | 57 |
| Ensuring Success | 58 |
| Planning and Management Implications..... | 60 |
| Planning Implications | 60 |
| Management Implications..... | 62 |
| Appendices..... | 63 |
| A Survey Cover Letter and Letter of Support..... | A1 |

List of Tables

| Table # | | Page |
|---------|--|------|
| 1 | Race/Ethnicity of Stakeholder Sample | 7 |
| 2 | Number of Months Stakeholders Reside in Valdez Annually | 9 |
| 3 | How Many Stakeholders Currently Utilize Trail Systems Maintained by VPRCS? ... | 12 |
| 4 | How Frequently do Stakeholders Utilize trails Maintained by VPRCS? | 12 |
| 5 | Stakeholder Behavioral Intentions Related to the Environment, Wildlife and Bears.. | 16 |
| 6 | Environmental Values of Stakeholder Respondents | 18 |
| 7 | Stakeholders' Familiarity with Meals Hill..... | 20 |
| 8 | Have Stakeholders Visited Meals Hill? | 20 |
| 9 | Stakeholders' Residential Proximity to Meals Hill | 20 |
| 10 | Stakeholders' Degree of Support Regarding Development of Meals Hill | 21 |
| 11 | What Makes Meals Hill Special to Stakeholders? | 21 |
| 12 | What is the Significance of Meals Hill for the City of Valdez? | 22 |
| 13 | Significance of Meals Hill for the City of Valdez (IQ)? | 23 |
| 14 | Most Frequently Used Trail Systems Maintained by VPRCSD? | 24 |
| 15 | Reasons Stakeholders Utilize VPRCSD Trails | 25 |
| 16 | How Development Could Serve Visitor Agencies (IQ) | 25 |
| 17 | How Development Can Best Serve Visitors (IQ) | 26 |
| 18 | Stakeholders' Priorities in Development of Meals Hill | 27 |
| 19 | What Ideal Development of Meals Hill Looks Like (IQ)..... | 28 |
| 20 | Important Characteristics in Development: User Groups | 31 |
| 21 | Important Characteristics in Development: Recreational User Groups | 33 |
| 22 | Stakeholders' Perceptions of Unacceptable Social Encounters on Meals Hill | 36 |
| 23 | Stakeholders' Acceptability of Recreational Encounters: Ranked | 37 |
| 24 | Characteristics of Visitors to be Considered in Development (IQ) | 38 |
| 25 | Stakeholders' Concerns Regarding the Development of Meals Hill | 40 |
| 26 | Stakeholders' Concerns Regarding the Development of Meals Hill (IQ) | 41 |
| 27 | Challenges Experienced Accessing Nature-Based Recreation | 42 |
| 28 | Challenges Experienced Accessing Nature-Based Recreation (IQ) | 44 |

List of Tables Continued

| Table # | | Page |
|---------|---|------|
| 29 | Barriers Visitors Experienced Accessing Nature-Based Recreation (IQ) | 44 |
| 30 | Issues Related to Trail Etiquette Stakeholders Would Like Improved | 45 |
| 31 | Stakeholders' Encounters with Wildlife on Meals Hill (IQ) | 45 |
| 32 | Species of Wildlife Stakeholders Encountered on Meals Hill (IQ) | 46 |
| 33 | Are Wildlife Encounters a Concern (IQ)? | 46 |
| 34 | Visitors' Motivations for Visiting Valdez | 52 |
| 35 | Did Visitors Participate in Nature-Based Recreation While Visiting? | 52 |
| 36 | What Recreation Activities Did Past Visitor Do While Visiting Valdez?..... | 53 |
| 37 | What Prevented Past Visitors' Participation in Nature-Based Recreation?..... | 53 |
| 38 | Do Future Visitors Plan to Participate in Nature-Based Recreation? | 54 |
| 39 | How Future Visitors Plan to Participate in Nature-Based Recreation | 55 |
| 40 | Influential Elements for Visitors' Participation in Nature-Based Recreation | 56 |

List of Figures

| Figure # | | Page |
|----------|--|------|
| 1 | Gender of Stakeholder Sample | 6 |
| 2 | Age Range of Stakeholder Sample | 7 |
| 3 | Stakeholders' Relationship to the City of Valdez | 8 |
| 4 | Number of Years Stakeholders Have Resided in Valdez | 9 |
| 5 | Stakeholders' Industries of Employment..... | 10 |
| 6 | Stakeholders' Reasons for Residing in Valdez | 11 |
| 7 | Stakeholders' Perceptions on the Environment, Tourism, and Valdez | 13 |
| 8 | Stakeholders' Opinions on Increasing Protected Land, Wildlife Populations, and Bear Populations..... | 14 |
| 9 | Stakeholder Behavioral Intentions Related to the Environment, Wildlife and Bears.. | 15 |
| 10 | Stakeholders' Priorities in the Development of Meals Hill | 27 |
| 11 | Stakeholder Participation in, and Preferences for, Recreational Activities | 29 |
| 12 | Stakeholders' Social Acceptability of People on Top of Meals Hill | 35 |
| 13 | Stakeholders' Concern Regarding the Development of Meals Hill..... | 39 |
| 14 | Visitor Gender Data | 47 |
| 15 | Visitor Age Data | 48 |
| 16 | Visitor Race/Ethnicity Data | 48 |
| 17 | Visitors' Relationship to Valdez | 49 |
| 18 | How Did Visitors Visit Valdez? | 50 |
| 19 | Visitors' Intended Means of Visiting Valdez | 51 |

This page intentionally left blank

Introduction: Need and Background

Photo 1: Meals Hill Aerial View*



Meals Hill is 184 acres of public land located near the Valdez Ferry Terminal in Valdez, AK. The land is permanently protected by a conservation easement, ensuring it will remain open to the public for recreation and that its valuable wildlife habitat will remain undeveloped. The Meals Hill property is a significant landmark with environmentally diverse habitat, and it has the potential to be a recreational destination for the City of Valdez.

In addition to its environmental significance, Meals Hill holds a rich historical significance for the City of Valdez. Likely utilized by Alaska Native Chugach and Ahtna tribes, Meals Hill has contributed to the development of Valdez since the 1898 gold rush.

In November 2019 the Great Land Trust purchased the property from The Port Valdez Company using Exxon Valdez Oil Spill (EVOS) Trustee Council funds and subsequently transferred the land to the City of Valdez. In accordance with the conservation easement, the City plans to transform Meals Hill into a non-motorized recreational area for community members, visitors, and all stakeholders. In order to proceed in a manner that addresses stakeholder needs, visions, and concerns, this project was initiated to gather and interpret critical input.

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

*All photos provided by Valdez Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Department

Overarching Purpose and Current Project Objectives

The purpose of this project is to gain a broad understanding of community members, visitors, and stakeholders' vision for the development of Meals Hill as a new nature park in the City of Valdez, AK. To pursue this purpose, the following objectives were taken:

1. Understand the significance of Meals Hill for Stakeholders
2. Understand stakeholder support and preferences for the development and use of Meals Hill
3. Anticipate keys to short and long-term success in the development of Meals Hill

The results will be used to make informed decisions regarding the development of a Meals Hill master plan.

Project Methods

On August, 8th 2020, Parks and People LLC led the Valdez Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Department through an evaluation process to identify themes of interest to guide the construction of data instruments. These instruments included a stakeholder survey, visitor organization survey, stakeholder interview script, and visitor organization interview script. The five guiding themes identified included:

Theme 1: What, if any, is the significance of Meals Hill for Stakeholders?

Theme 2: What are the desired uses of Meals Hill?

Theme 3: What are users' preferences in the development of Meals Hill?

Theme 4: What does short and long-term success look like in the development of Meals Hill?

Theme 5: What degree of support exists regarding the development of Meals Hill?

Survey Development

Electronic-formatted surveys were constructed utilizing Qualtrics Survey Software. These surveys utilized pathway-logic to encompass unique question sets for both stakeholder and visitor organization groups. Stakeholder surveys included 51 questions (45 closed-ended and 6 open-ended questions). Visitor surveys included 10 close-ended questions. Hard copy stakeholder surveys included the same line of questioning and were constructed on the front and back of 2-pages.

Incentive for Stakeholders and Visitors to Complete Survey

Each survey included a descriptive cover-letter informing respondents of the conservation easement and community park designation. Further, an aerial photo of Meals Hill, a support letter from the Valdez Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Director, and a chance to win 1 of 10 \$50 Visa gift cards as an incentive to participate was included.

Interview Script Development

Interview questions were constructed from the 5 guiding themes identify by the Valdez Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services department. Each interview script included 7 questions and ended asking the interviewee to recommend another stakeholder or organization to be contacted.

Sampling and Data Collection Plan

Surveys were distributed on September 14th and were available for 5 weeks (termination date October 18th, 2020). To announce the survey opportunity, the following delivery methods were taken:

- A link to the electronic format survey, and information regarding access to hard copy survey, was provided on the Meals Hills Master Plan website (<https://mealshillmasterplan.com/>).
- Post-cards including an electronic link and methods for obtaining a hard copy were distributed via the Valdez, AK post office in 2,025 post office boxes. An additional 25 post cards were delivered to the Valdez Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Department to distribute by hand.
- A “Business and Community Podcast” interview of the Valdez Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Director and Meals Hill Project Team Lead discussing the survey was recorded and made publicly available via the local radio station webpage. Further, public radio announcements were distributed throughout the surveying period (8 announcements in total).
- Hard copy surveys were printed and made available at the Valdez Community Civic Center and Visitors Bureau.
- Following each stakeholder and visitor organization interview, a follow-up email was sent including a link to the electronic-survey.
- An announcement was made at the 2020 SWAN WOW Symposium.
- Facebook posts announcing the survey opportunity were made weekly by the Valdez Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Department throughout the surveying period.
- Over 50 visitor organizations throughout Valdez, the broader state of Alaska, and globally shared social media links to the survey opportunity in hopes of increasing visitor participation.

Phone interviews were conducted between September 21st and October 18th, 2020 (duration = 4 weeks).

Interviews utilized an adapted snow ball sampling procedure in which the Valdez Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Department provided an initial list of stakeholder and visitor organizations. From this list, a randomized sample was selected to contact for the first round of interviews. At the completion of each interview, participants were asked to provide the name and contact information for another stakeholder or visitor organization representative to contact for an interview. Interviews continued until researchers identified saturation of information and no new information was being provided.

Analysis of Data

Following the completion of the data collection period, all completed surveys were reviewed by two researchers and cleaned for missing and un-reliable data.

To analyze responses to closed-ended questions, means and standard deviations were computed for all questions. Groups were identified and compared using one-way analysis of variance. For statistically significant difference, post-hoc comparisons were used to identify direction and significance of differences between groups.

An open coding technique was used for most open-ended responses. Responses were first coded into corresponding groups individually by two researchers. Next, coding notes were shared to identify congruencies in coding and, upon agreement, categories were created from the list of codes. Lastly, each researcher recoded responses utilizing the agreed upon codes and categories. Respondents' environmental values were coded using Kellert's typology of environmental values (Kellert, 2005*). Two researchers each used the predefined value categories to code responses. Codes were compared and discrepancies were addressed to determine final code categories.

*Kellert, S.R. 2005. Building for life: designing and understanding the human-nature connection. Washington DC: Island Press.

Project Results

Number of Respondents

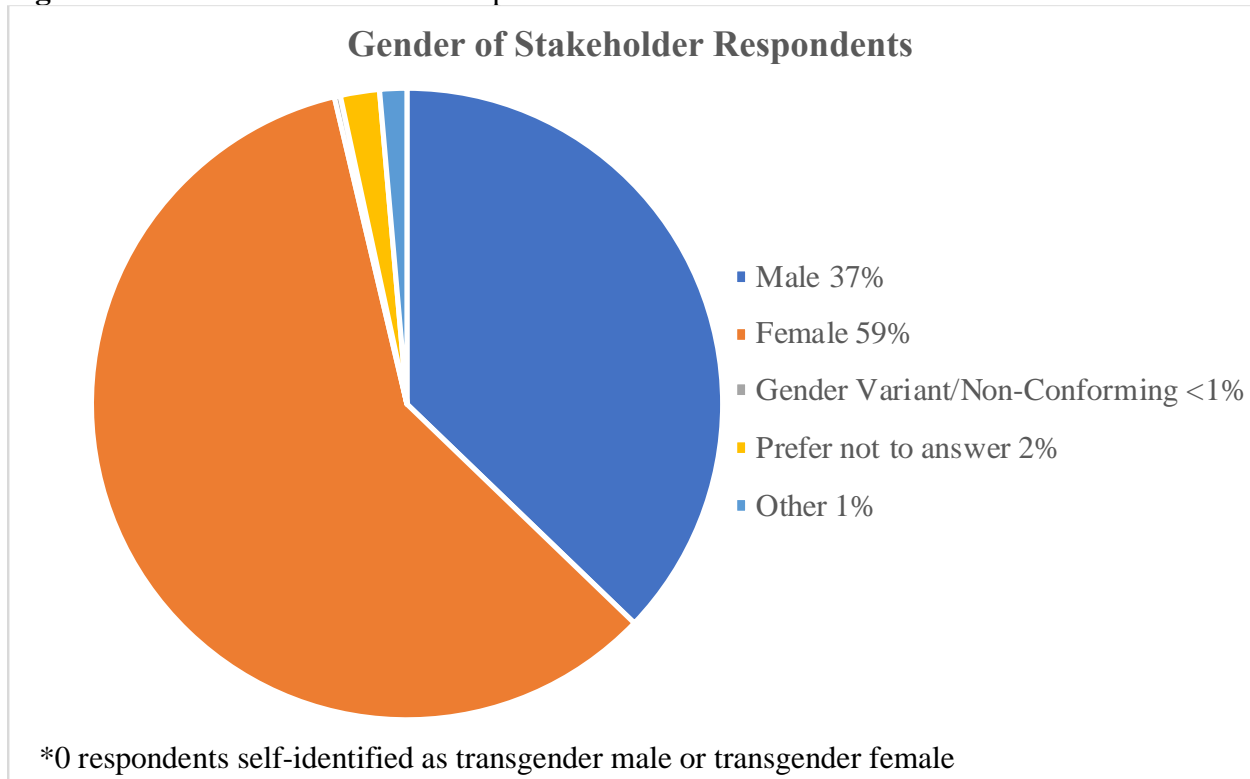
At the completion of data cleaning, the final sample size was 428 completed surveys (352 stakeholders and 76 visitors). Further, 24 interviews were completed including 16 stakeholders and 8 visitor organizations.

STAKEHOLDER DATA

Understanding Meals Hill Stakeholders

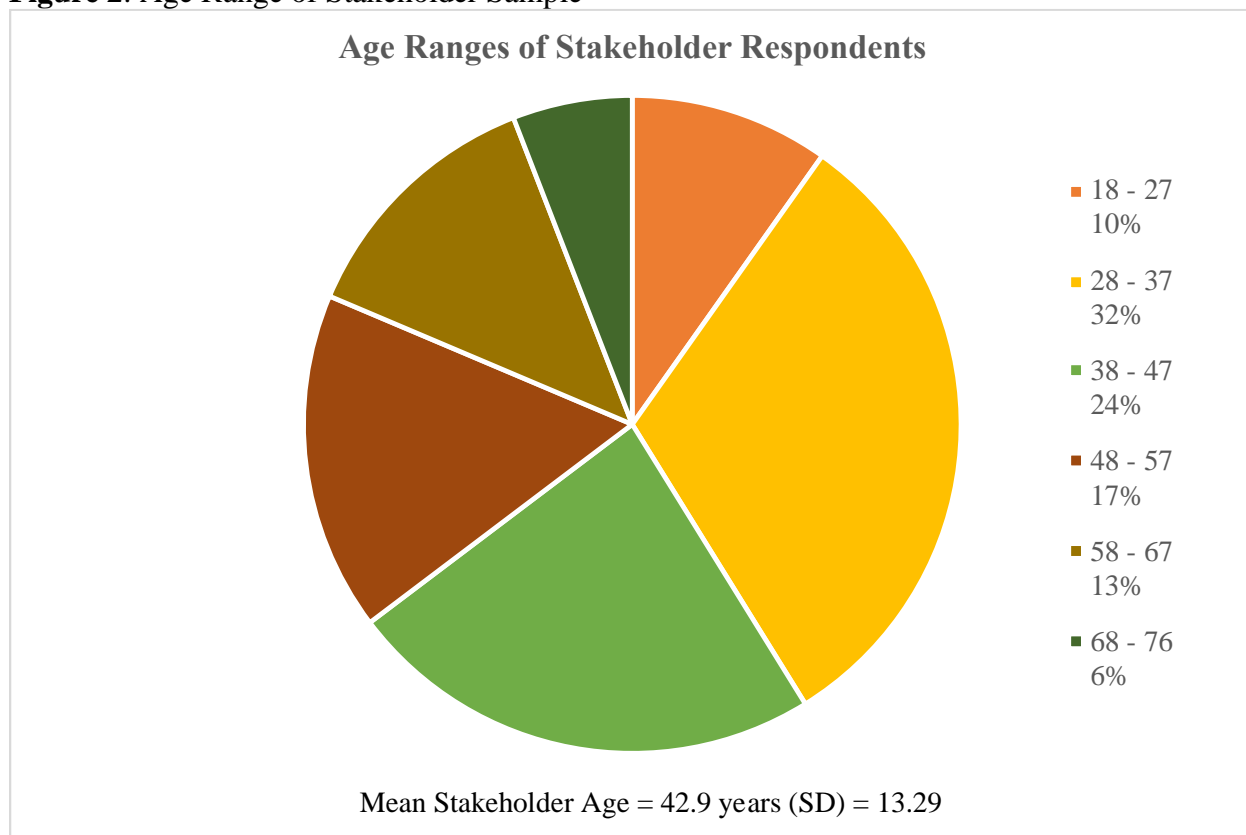
Females made up 59% of the stakeholder sample (Figure 1). Stakeholders ranged in age from 18 to 76 years old ($M = 43$; Figure 2). *White, not of Hispanic descent* was the most frequently indicated race representing 89% of the sample (Table 1).

Figure 1: Gender of Stakeholder Sample



N = 352

Figure 2: Age Range of Stakeholder Sample



N = 352

Table 1: Race/Ethnicity of Stakeholder Sample

| Q: Which of the following best describes your racial or ethnic background? | Frequency | Percent |
|--|-----------|---------|
| White, not of Hispanic descent | 312 | 89 |
| Other | 16 | 5 |
| Hispanic | 10 | 3 |
| Asian | 6 | 1 |
| Alaskan Native | 5 | 1 |
| American Indian | 3 | 1 |
| Black, not of Hispanic descent | 0 | 0 |
| Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander | 0 | 0 |

N = 352

**Total does not equal 100% because sample was asked to select all that apply.*

Most stakeholders currently reside in Valdez (88%; Figure 3). Of these, 26% indicated they have resided in Valdez for 5 or less years. Additionally, 44% indicated they had resided in Valdez for 10 or less years (Figure 4). Ninety four percent of this sample indicated they reside in Valdez 10 – 12 months each year (Table 2).

Figure 3: Stakeholders' Relationship to the City of Valdez

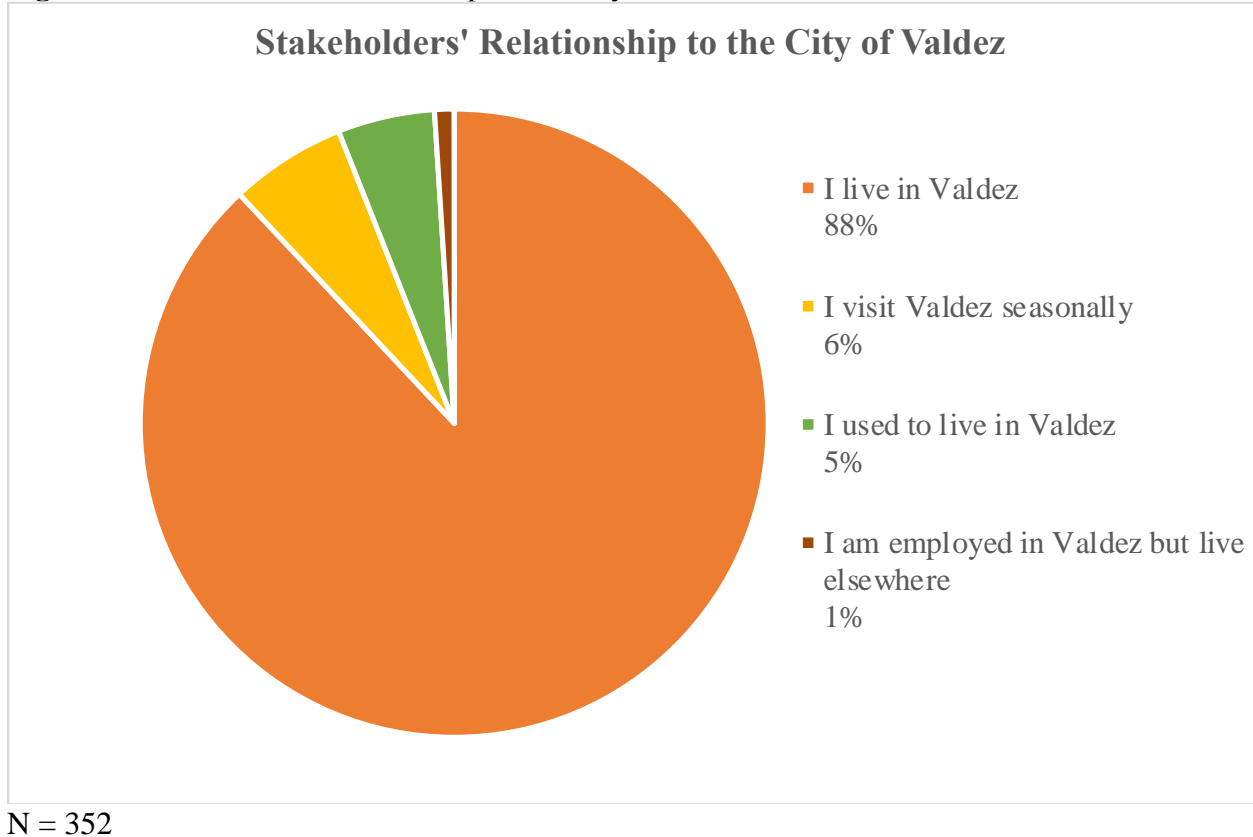
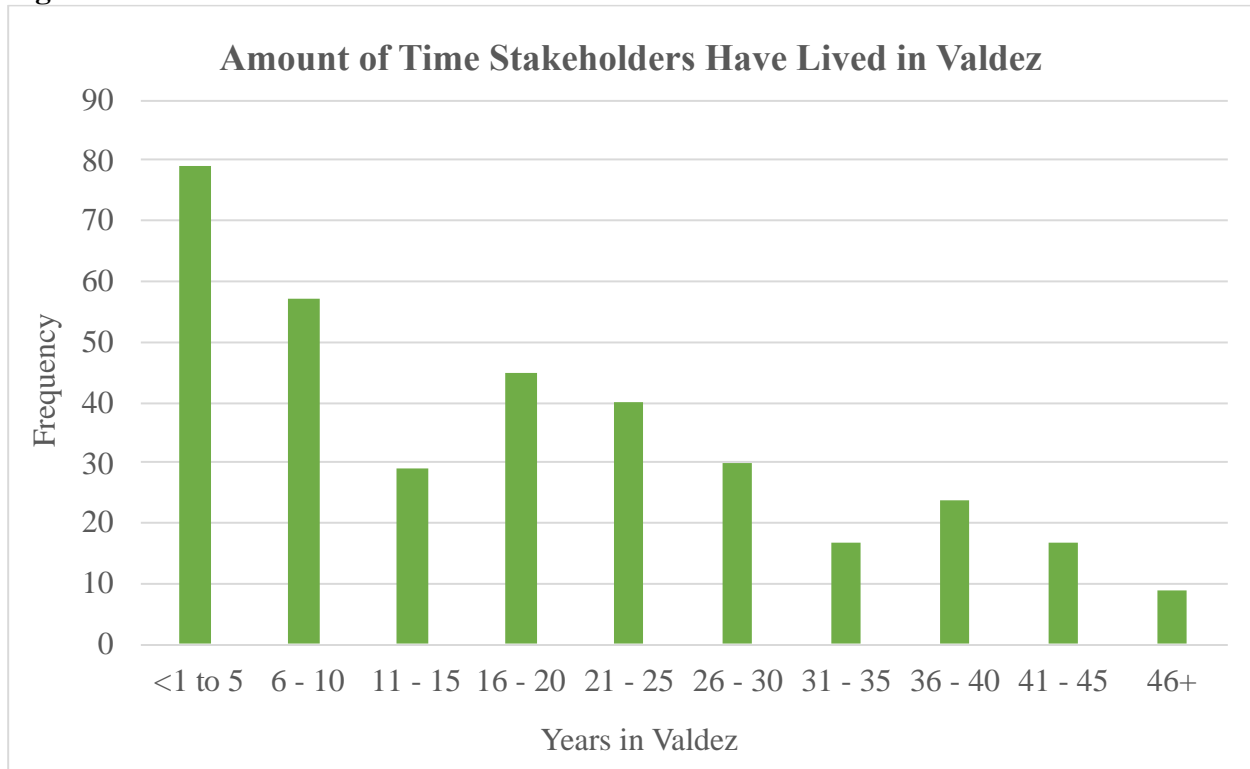


Figure 4: Number of Years Stakeholders Have Resided in Valdez



N = 309

Table 2: Number of Months Stakeholders Reside in Valdez Annually

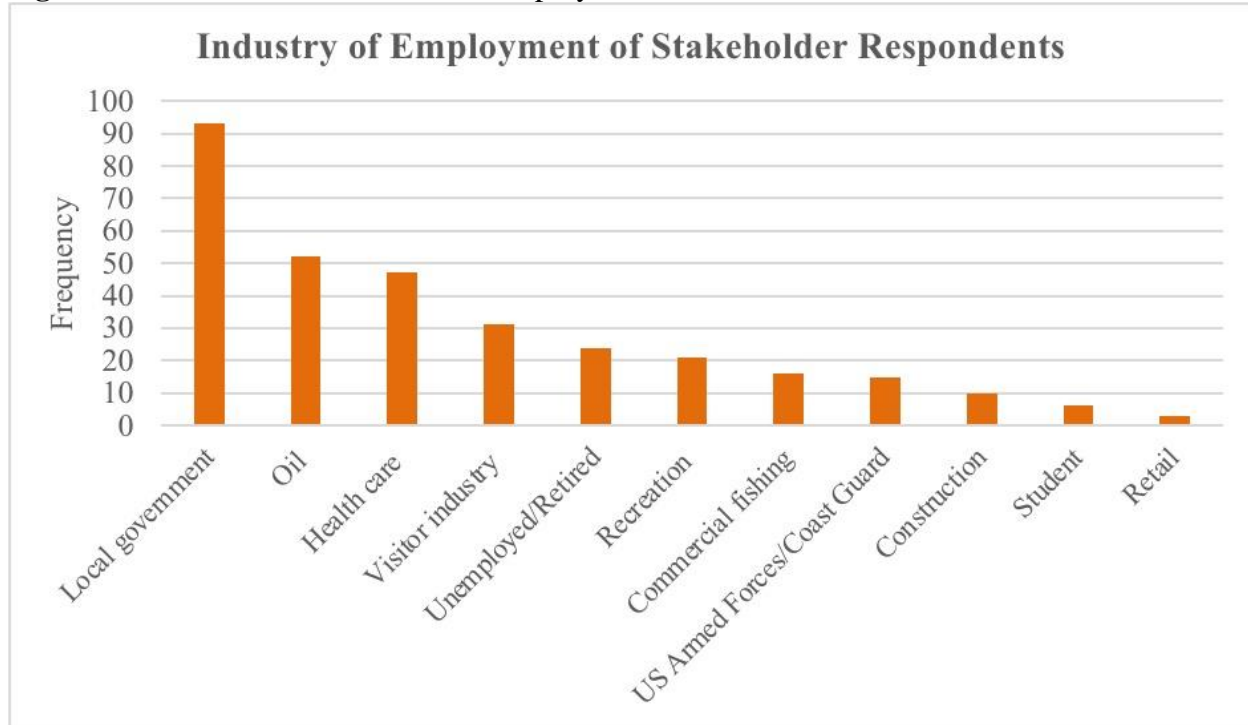
| <i>Q: Approximately how many months out of each year do you reside in Valdez?</i> | Frequency | Percent |
|---|-----------|---------|
| 3 months or less | 6 | 2 |
| 4 to 6 months | 6 | 2 |
| 7 to 9 months | 8 | 3 |
| 10 to 12 months | 289 | 94 |

N = 309

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Local government (e.g. city, school, tribally provided services, maintenance; 26%), *oil* (e.g., pipeline, shipment, refining, safety; 15%), *health care* (13%), and *visitor services* (9%) were the four most frequently indicated industries of employment within our stakeholder sample (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Stakeholders' Industries of Employment



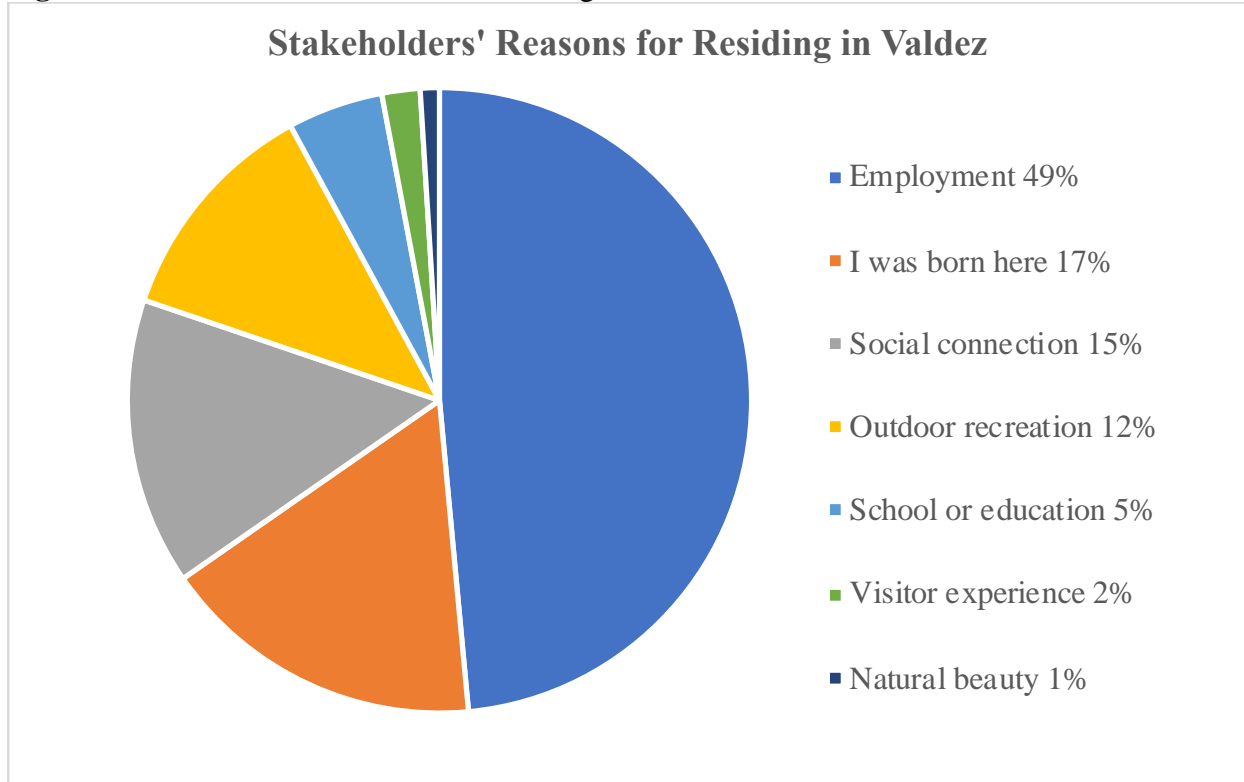
N = 352

**Numbers above do not total 352 because respondents were asked to mark all that apply.*

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Of stakeholders who indicated they currently reside in Valdez, *employment* (49%), *location of birth* (17%), *social connections* (e.g. parents or spouse; 15%), and *opportunities for outdoor adventure recreation* (12%) were the most frequently indicated reasons these stakeholders resided in Valdez (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Stakeholders' Reasons for Residing in Valdez



N = 309

Stakeholders' Use of Valdez Trails

When asked if stakeholders currently recreate at any of the trail systems maintained by the Valdez Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Department, 90% indicated *yes*, 6% indicated *no*, and 4% indicated they were unaware of who maintains the trail systems they utilize in Valdez (Table 3). Of the 94% who indicated they utilized trail systems, 75% indicated they utilize these trails multiple times a month or more frequently with the largest percentage (37%) indicating they use the trails multiple times a week (Table 4).

Table 3: How Many Stakeholders Currently Utilize Trail Systems Maintained by VPRCS?

| <i>Q: Do you currently recreate at any of the trail systems maintained by the Valdez Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Department?</i> | Frequency | Percent |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Yes | 316 | 90 |
| No | 22 | 6 |
| I do not know who maintains the trails I utilize in Valdez | 14 | 4 |

N = 352

Table 4: How Frequently do Stakeholders Utilize Trails Maintained by VPRCS?

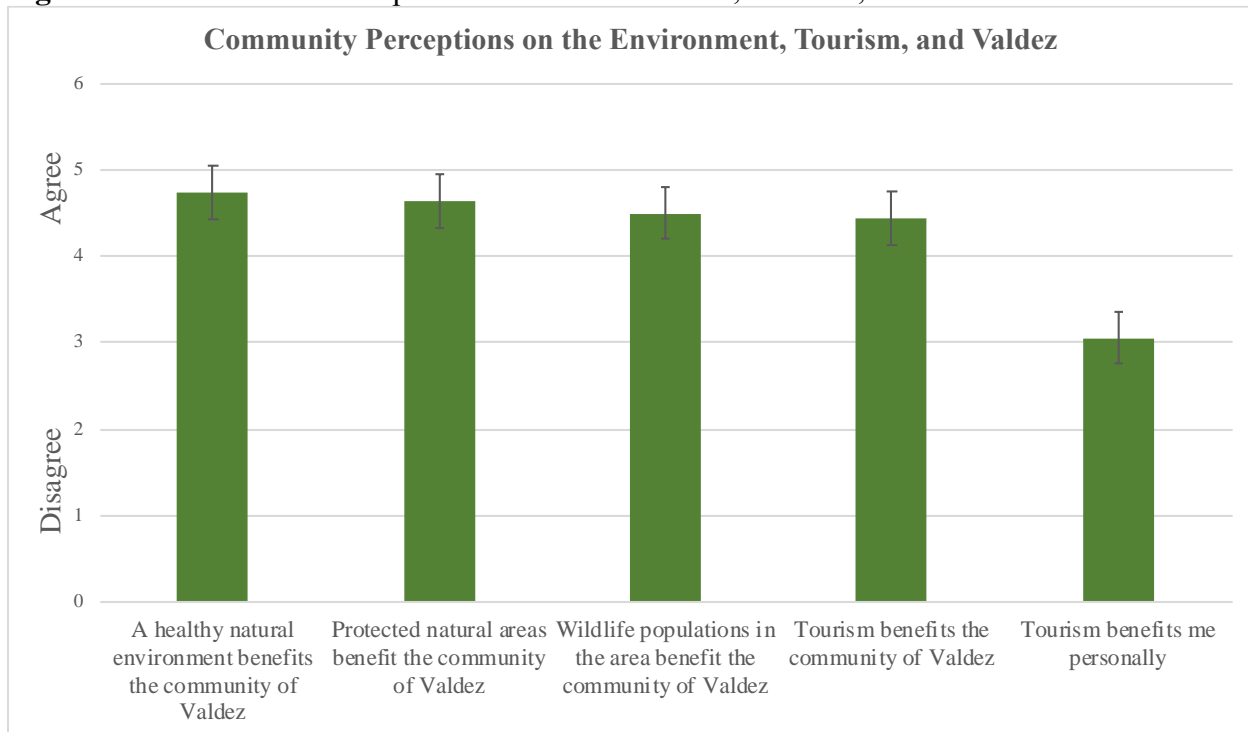
| <i>Q: How often do you utilize these trails?</i> | Frequency | Percent |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Everyday | 34 | 10 |
| Multiple times a week | 123 | 37 |
| Multiple times a month | 92 | 28 |
| Multiple times a year | 80 | 24 |

N = 330

Stakeholders' Environmental and Tourism Values

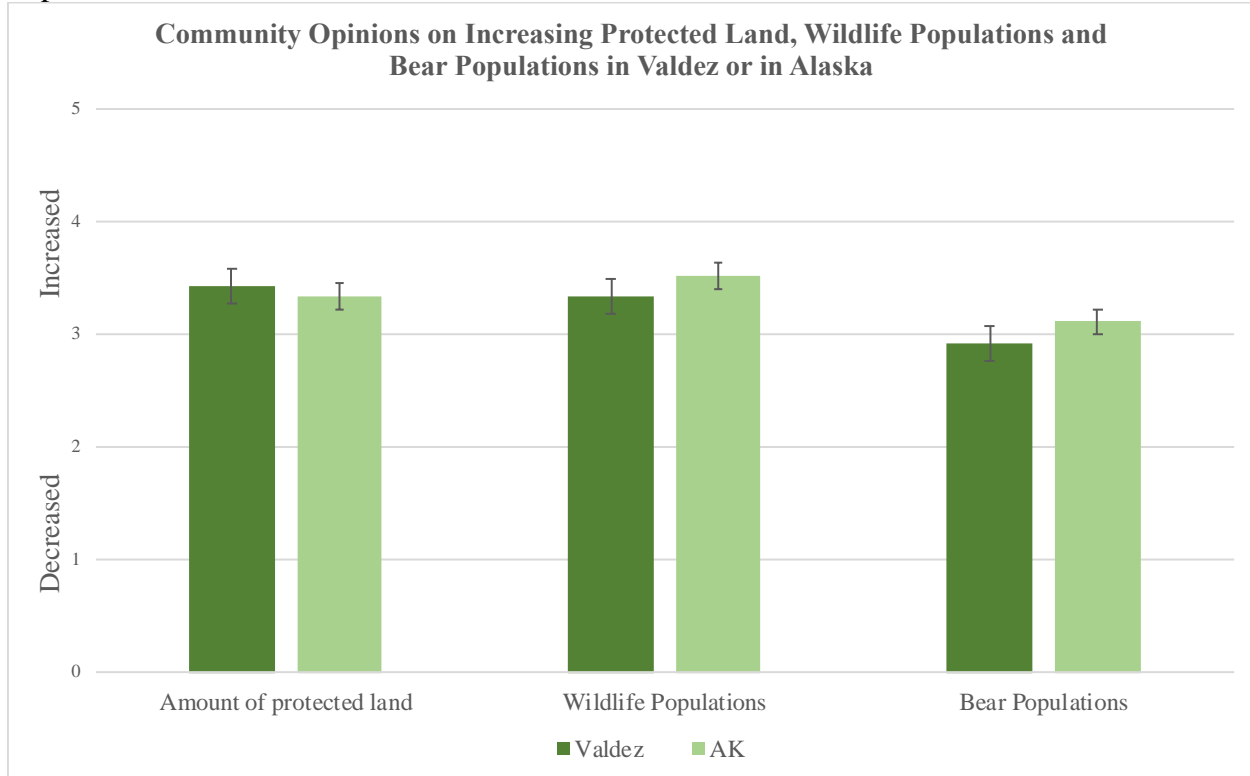
Stakeholders indicated that the *natural environment* (M=4.73, SD=0.71), *protected areas* (M=4.63 SD=0.80), *wildlife populations* (M=4.50, SD=0.81) and *tourism* (M=4.43 SD=0.85) all benefit the community of Valdez. Stakeholders were neutral (M=3.06, SD=1.28) on whether tourism benefits them personally (Figure 7). Stakeholders felt that the amount of protected land in both Valdez (M=3.42, SD=0.92) and Alaska (M=3.34, SD=0.99) should be slightly increased. They indicated more support for wildlife and bear populations in Alaska to be increased than those specifically in Valdez (Figure 8).

Figure 7: Stakeholders' Perceptions on the Environment, Tourism, and Valdez



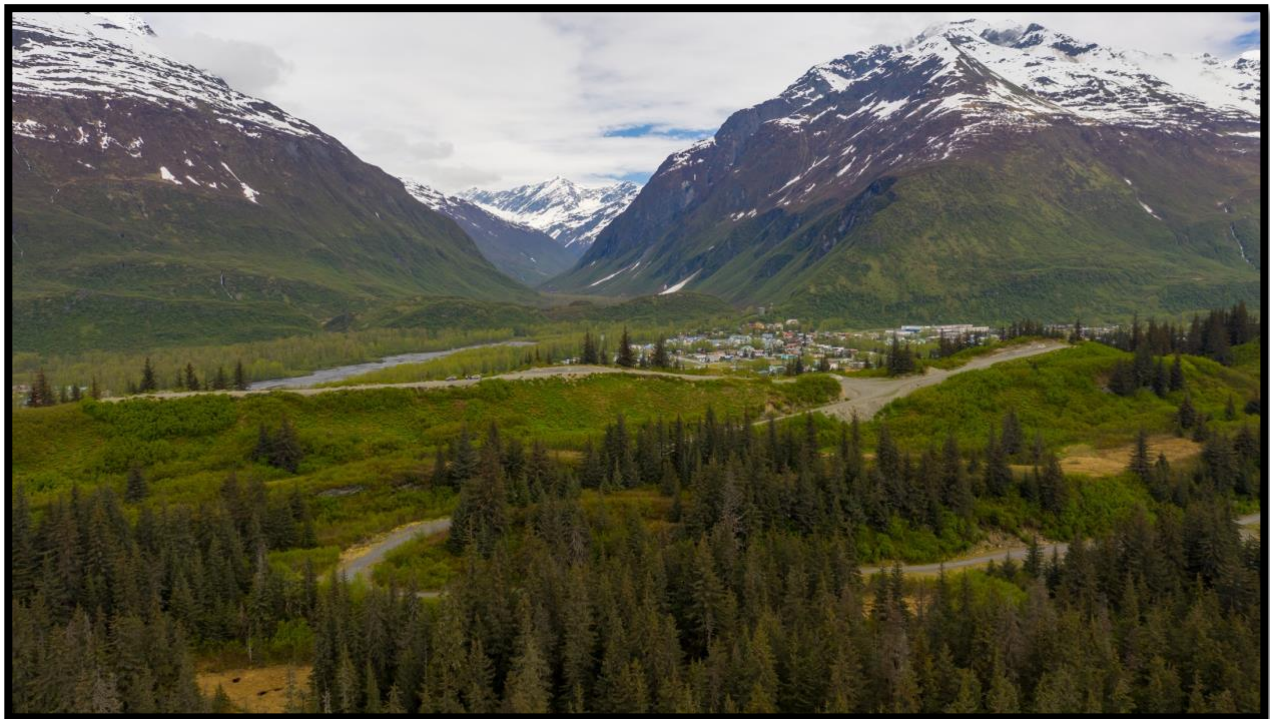
N = 352

Figure 8: Stakeholders' Opinions on Increasing Protected Land, Wildlife Populations, and Bear Populations



N = 352

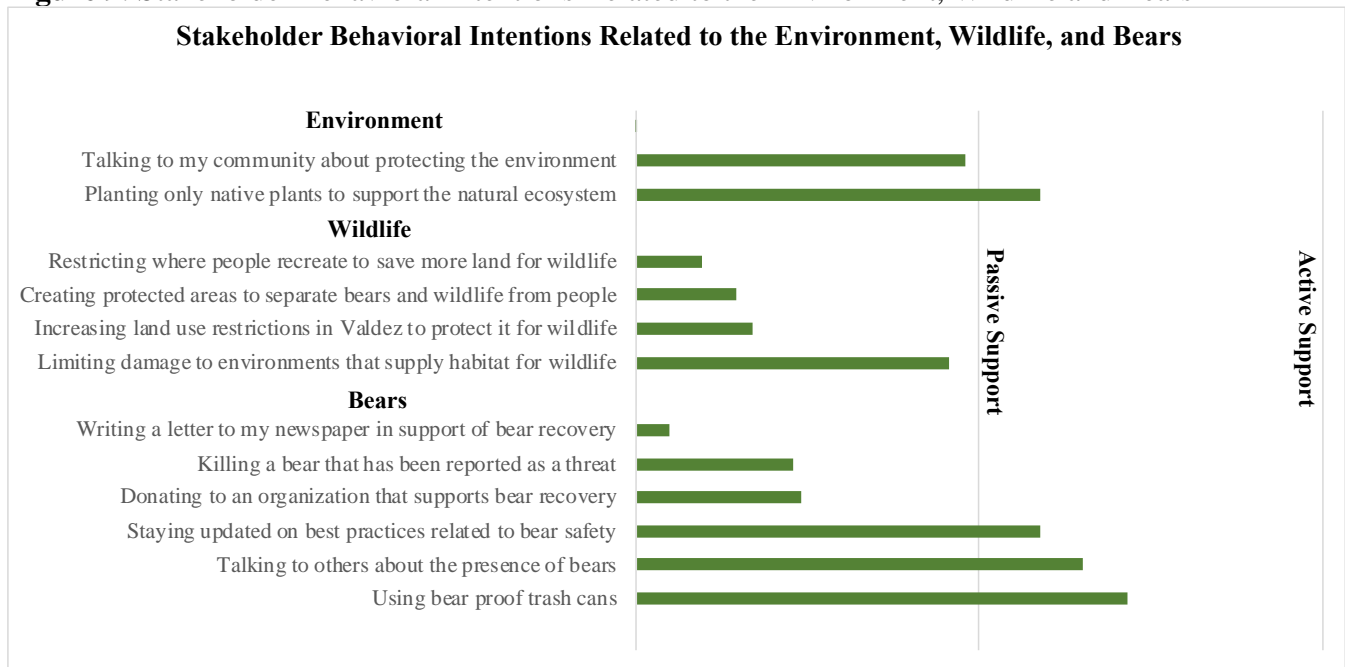
Photo 2: Meals Hill View of Town



Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Stakeholders indicated support for behaviors intended to protect the environment and wildlife populations, though their support was neutral to passive (indicating general support for the behavior) rather than active (indicating an intention to engage in the behavior). The exception was a higher score on the item *Planting only native plants to support the natural ecosystem* (M=4.18, SD=0.81). With regards to bears, stakeholders demonstrated stronger intention to engage in behaviors related to bear management and conservation. Respondents indicated active support for *Staying updated on best practices related to bear safety* (M=4.18, SD=0.77), *Talking to others about the presence of bears* (M=4.30, SD=0.70), and *Using bear proof trash cans* (M=4.43, SD=0.77). Stakeholders' opinions were closer to neutral for the items *Writing a letter to my newspaper in support of bear recovery* (M=3.10, SD=0.89) and *Restricting where people recreate to save more land for wildlife* (M=3.19, SD=1.05) (Figure 9, Table 5).

Figure 9: Stakeholder Behavioral Intentions Related to the Environment, Wildlife and Bears



Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Table 5: Stakeholder Behavioral Intentions Related to the Environment, Wildlife and Bears

| | |
|--|-----------------------|
| <i>Q: Please indicate how likely you are to either actively oppose or actively support the following behaviors related to environmental conservation: (1 = Actively Oppose; would take action to prevent) to (5 = Actively Support; I would engage in this behavior)</i> | |
| Limiting damage to environments that supply habitat for wildlife | M = 3.91 SD = 1.01 |
| Increasing land use restrictions in Valdez to protect it for wildlife | M = 3.34 SD = 1.02 |
| Killing a bear that has been reported as a threat | M = 3.46 SD = 1.08 |
| Donating to an organization that supports bear recovery | M = 3.48 SD = 0.95 |
| Using bear proof trash cans | M = 4.43 SD = 0.77 |
| Planting only native plants to support the natural ecosystem | M = 4.18 SD = 0.81 |
| Talking to others about the presence of bears | M = 4.30 SD = 0.70 |
| Talking to my community about the importance of protecting the environment | M = 3.96 SD = 0.86 |
| Restricting where people recreate to save more land for wildlife | M = 3.19 SD = 1.05 |
| Writing a letter to my newspaper in support of bear recovery | M = 3.10 SD = 0.89 |
| Staying updated on best practices related to bear safety | M = 4.18 SD = 0.77 |
| Creating additional protected areas to separate bears and other wildlife from people | M = 3.29 SD = 1.04 |

N = 352

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Respondents were asked to explain what they value most about the natural areas where they recreate. Their responses were coded using Kellert's Typology of Environmental Values (Kellert, 2005). Definitions for each value type included in the typology can be found in Table 6 along with examples and participant quotes representing that value. *Naturalistic* was the most common value represented (N=91) in respondent answers indicating that many stakeholders value the natural environment because it allows them to have a natural experience and connect with nature. A similar number of respondents (N=89) expressed an *Aesthetic* value of nature indicating that they value the natural environment because of its beauty. Many respondents (N=52) expressed a *Dominionistic* value which indicated that they value the natural environment because of their ability to control it. These examples were most commonly expressed in participants' desire to manipulate the natural environment to ensure safety and convenience. There was not a strong representation of *Moralistic* values (N=8) in the sample indicating that respondents do not generally value the natural environment specifically because they feel an obligation to protect it (Table 6). The findings from this question indicate that many hold the strongest value for Meals Hill if it provides them with beautiful, scenic experiences in a natural setting and can provide safety and comfort in doing so. Stakeholders may not be inclined to participate in the actual conservation of the property, although their natural experiences and access to its beauty will depend on its protection.

Table 6: Environmental Values of Stakeholder Respondents

| Value | Definition | Frequency | Examples | Sample Quotes |
|--------------------------|--|-----------|--|---|
| Naturalistic | Engagement with nature through direct experience, encounters | 91 | Experiencing the natural environment, connecting with nature | <i>I value keeping the areas as close to the natural and original state as possible. I value restoration and preservation, we should be able to access and appreciate these gifts we are fortunate to reside in, without tearing down more trees and uprooting more ecosystems. No matter the size.</i> |
| Aesthetic | Aesthetic attraction to nature | 89 | Beauty, scenery, views | <i>Scenic views</i> <i>Scenery is why we all get out and utilize these trails the views of what is what was and what could be</i> |
| Dominionistic | The urge to master and control natural environments | 52 | Safety is primary value, trail maintenance | <i>Safety! Hoping to never encounter a bear!</i> <i>Safety and maintenance on the trails I frequent</i> |
| Spiritual | Feelings of connection with nature, creation, engendering spiritual meaning and purpose. Feelings of transcendence; reverence for nature | 44 | Experiencing God's creation, appreciation of nature as a gift, peace and meaning | <i>I value Gods creation and like being able to see the beautiful views and constant changes with weather and seasons.</i> |
| Ecologicistic-Scientific | Understanding of nature; The desire to know and intellectually comprehend the world, from basic facts to more complex understanding | 21 | Valuing the ecosystem, habitat for wildlife, trees or plant life | <i>I enjoy experiencing natural and wild ecosystems and getting exercise outdoors.</i> <i>Highlighting natural features and providing some information about the area's geography, history, flora and fauna, etc.</i> |

Table 6: Environmental Values of Stakeholder Respondents (Continued)

| Value | Definition | Frequency | Examples | Sample Quotes |
|-------------------------------|--|-----------|---|--|
| Humanistic | Emotional attachment, affection for nature or aspects of nature | 10 | Place to connect with loved ones, meaningful for personal relationships | <i>I enjoy being able to connect with my family in the wilderness.</i> |
| Moralistic | Sense of responsibility for caring for the earth. Ethical concern for nature, restraint when exploiting nature | 8 | Caring for the natural environment, feeling a sense of responsibility | <i>It doesn't feel humanized; that we are a small part in nature. We share the outdoors with the creatures that also reside here. We keep it clean even when its multi used.</i> |
| Utilitarian | The desire to utilize and materially exploit the natural world | 4 | Hunting, harvesting, foraging | <i>Berry picking and foraging</i> |
| Negativistic/ Neutralistic | Antipathy towards and sometimes fearful avoidance of nature | 1 | Distance from nature or dangers | <i>Clear all the branches for bear safety and spray for mosquitoes</i> |
| Symbolic | Representational expression of nature through images, language and design | 0 | N.A. | N.A. |

N =243

Stakeholders' Familiarity with Meals Hill

All interviewees, including stakeholders and visitor organization representatives, indicated they were familiar with the Meals Hill property (N=24; Table 7). Eighty five percent indicated they had previously visited the Meals Hill property (Table 8).

Table 7: Stakeholders' Familiarity with Meals Hill

| <i>Q: Are you familiar with the Meals Hill property?</i> | | Frequency | Percent |
|--|-----|-----------|---------|
| Stakeholders | Yes | 16 | 100 |
| | No | 0 | 0 |
| Visitor Organization Representatives | Yes | 8 | 100 |
| | No | 0 | 0 |

N = 24

Table 8: Have Stakeholders Visited Meals Hill?

| <i>Q: Have you ever visited Meals Hill?</i> | Frequency | Percent |
|---|-----------|---------|
| Yes | 299 | 85 |
| No | 46 | 13 |
| I am not sure | 7 | 2 |

N = 352

Of stakeholders who indicated they currently reside in Valdez (N = 309), 2% indicated their residential property borders Meals Hill, 25% indicated they reside more than a 5-minute drive away from Meals Hill, 31% indicated they can see Meals Hill from their residential property, and 42% indicated they reside within a 3 – 5-minute drive of the Meals Hill (Table 9).

Table 9: Stakeholders' Residential Proximity to Meals Hill

| <i>Q: Which of the following best identifies your residential proximity to Meals Hill?</i> | Frequency | Percent |
|--|-----------|---------|
| I am within a 3 to 5-minute vehicle drive of Meals Hill | 129 | 42 |
| I can see Meals Hill from my residential property | 96 | 31 |
| I am more than 5-minutes away from Meals Hill (via vehicle) | 78 | 25 |
| Meals Hill borders my residential property line | 5 | 2 |

N = 309

Stakeholders' Degree of Support Regarding the Development of Meals Hill

Stakeholders overwhelmingly support the development of Meals Hill with 73% indicating they support *additional development for non-motorized recreational opportunities*. Only 9% of respondents indicated that they *do not support any development* and the other 18% of respondents support the *improvement of existing infrastructure* (Table 10).

Table 10: Stakeholders' Degree of Support Regarding Development of Meals Hill

| <i>Q: Which best describes your support regarding the development of Meals Hill?</i> | Frequency | Percent |
|--|-----------|---------|
| I support additional development for non-motorized recreational opportunities | 257 | 73 |
| I support the improvement of existing infrastructure | 62 | 18 |
| I do not support any development | 31 | 9 |

N = 352

Stakeholders' Beliefs in the Significance of Meals Hill

From stakeholders' perspective, *opportunities for scenic views* (50%), *close proximity to town* (35%), *opportunities to engage in nature* (32%) and *opportunities for outdoor recreation* (20%) were the four most frequently indicated characteristics that make Meals Hill special (Table 11).

Table 11: What Makes Meals Hill Special to Stakeholders?

| <i>Q: From your perspective, what makes Meals Hill special?</i> | Frequency | Percent |
|---|-----------|---------|
| Opportunities for scenic views | 177 | 50 |
| Close proximity to town | 122 | 35 |
| Opportunities to engage in nature | 111 | 32 |
| Opportunities for outdoor recreation (e.g. Mtn biking, hiking) | 71 | 20 |
| A place to experience quite space and solitude | 26 | 7 |
| Opportunities for foraging (e.g. berries) | 21 | 6 |
| Opportunities for development | 18 | 5 |
| Opportunities to share Valdez history | 4 | 1 |
| Serves as a barrier for the city from the ocean | 3 | <1 |

N = 352

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Stakeholders most frequently indicated *opportunities to recreate in nature* (43%), *opportunities for scenic views* (12%), *opportunities to attract visitors* (11%), an *opportunity to conserve nature* (11%), and *accessible nature opportunities* (11%) as the significance of Meals Hill for the City of Valdez (Table 12). Notably, only 10 respondents indicated *economic development* as a significance of Meals Hill for the City of Valdez (Table 12).

Table 12: What is the Significance of Meals Hill for the City of Valdez?

| <i>Q: What do you view as the significance of Meals Hill <u>for the City of Valdez</u>?</i> | Frequency | Percent |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Opportunities to recreate in nature | 153 | 43% |
| Opportunities for scenic views | 42 | 12% |
| Opportunity to attract visitors | 38 | 11% |
| Opportunity to conserve nature | 37 | 11% |
| Accessible nature opportunities | 37 | 11% |
| Opportunities to share Valdez history | 23 | 7% |
| Serves as a barrier for the city from the ocean | 10 | 3% |
| Economic development | 10 | 3% |
| Opportunities for foraging (e.g. berries) | 5 | 1% |

N = 352

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Stakeholders most frequently indicated *opportunities to engage in moderate to easy-difficulty outdoor recreation* (81%), *opportunities to experience undeveloped nature* (56%), and *opportunities to attract visitors* (50%) as the significance of Meals Hill for the City of Valdez (Table 13). Though mentioned, *opportunities to share the history of Valdez* or *opportunities to see wildlife* were less common (Table 13).

Table 13: What is the Significance of Meals Hill for the City of Valdez (Interview Question)?

| <i>Q: Please describe the significance of the Meals Hill for the city of Valdez?</i> | Frequency | Percent |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Opportunities to engage in moderate to easy-difficulty outdoor recreation (e.g. mtn biking, snow shoeing) | 13 | 81 |
| Opportunities to experience undeveloped nature | 9 | 56 |
| Opportunity to attract visitors | 8 | 50 |
| Close proximity to town | 6 | 38 |
| Opportunities for scenic views | 4 | 25 |
| Opportunities to share Valdez history | 2 | 13 |
| Opportunities to see wildlife | 2 | 13 |

N = 16

Stakeholders' Desired Uses, and Preferences for the Development, of Meals Hill

Mineral Creek/Homestead Trail (44%), Dock Point Trail (11%), winter trails in-town (9%) and out-of-town (5%) were trails stakeholders indicated they utilize most frequently (Table 14). When asked why they utilized these trails most frequently, stakeholders indicated proximity of trails to residence (55%), the trail fits their recreational needs (49%), and opportunities for scenic views (49%) as the most influential reasons for their frequent use (Table 14).

Table 14: Most Frequently Used Trail Systems Maintained by VPRCSD?

| <i>Q: Which Valdez trail systems do you utilize most frequently?</i> | Frequency | Percent |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Mineral Creek/Homestead Trail | 155 | 44 |
| Dock Point Trail | 37 | 11 |
| Winter Trails (In town) | 30 | 9 |
| Winter Trails (Out-of town) | 19 | 5 |
| Shoup Bay Trail | 16 | 5 |
| Civic Center Overlook Trail | 13 | 4 |
| Keystone Canyon Pack Trail | 11 | 3 |
| John Hunter Memorial Trail | 8 | 2 |
| Goat Trail/Wagon Road | 7 | 2 |
| Alpine Woods Trail | 7 | 2 |
| Overlook Trail | 3 | 1 |

N = 352

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Of the 352 stakeholders, 155 (44%) indicated they utilized Mineral Creek Trail most frequently. Of this sample, stakeholders indicated *close proximity to my residence* (65%), *opportunities for scenic views* (59%), and that the *trail is well maintained* (44%) as the three most influential reasons they utilize Mineral Creek Trail more than others (Table 15). The least common reason for selecting a trail to use was the enjoyment of seeing others (5% for Mineral Creek and All Trail Systems; Table 15).

Table 15: Most Frequently Indicated Reasons Stakeholders Utilize VPRCSD Trails

| <i>Q: Why do you utilize this trail system more frequently than others?</i> | Mineral Creek (N = 155) | | All Trail Systems (N = 352) | |
|---|----------------------------|---------|--------------------------------|---------|
| | Frequency | Percent | Frequency | Percent |
| Close proximity to my residence | 100 | 65 | 193 | 55 |
| Fits my recreational needs | 64 | 41 | 172 | 49 |
| Opportunities for scenic views | 91 | 59 | 171 | 49 |
| Trail is well maintained | 68 | 44 | 126 | 36 |
| I enjoy the solitude of this trail | 49 | 32 | 110 | 31 |
| I feel safe on this trail | 43 | 28 | 92 | 26 |
| I enjoy seeing others on this trail | 8 | 5 | 17 | 5 |

*Total does not equal 100% because sample was asked to select all that apply.

When asked how the development of Meals Hill could best serve visitor agencies, representatives indicated *serving as an attraction for diverse visitors (not just cruise-line tourists; 100%)*, *providing accessible outdoor recreation opportunities* (63%), and *designing connectivity into town* (50%) most frequently (Table 16).

Table 16: How Could the Development of Meals Hill Best Serve Visitor Agencies (Interview Question)?

| <i>Q: How could the development of this property best serve visitor agencies in Valdez?</i> | Frequency | Percent |
|---|-----------|---------|
| Serving as an attraction for diverse visitors (not just cruise-line tourists) | 8 | 100 |
| Providing accessible outdoor recreation opportunities (e.g. biking, exploration) | 5 | 63 |
| Designing connectivity into town (e.g. foot trail) | 4 | 50 |
| Providing opportunities for scenic views | 2 | 25 |
| Providing free recreation opportunities | 2 | 25 |

N = 8

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Stakeholders who were interviewed indicated a range of ways Meals Hill could best serve visitors (Table 17). *Access to easy to moderate-difficulty outdoor recreation opportunities* (75%) was the most frequently stated reason (Table 17). *The presence of informative signage and maps, opportunities to experience nature* and *scenic views* were also commonly mentioned by interviewees. *Places to rest* and *opportunities to learn about the Valdez industry* were each only mentioned by one interviewee (Table 17).

Table 17: How Can the Development of Meals Hill Best Serve Visitors (Interview Question)?

| <i>Q: How do you feel the development of this property could best serve Valdez visitors?</i> | Frequency | Percent |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Access to easy to moderate-difficulty outdoor recreation opportunities (i.e. mountain biking, hiking trails) | 6 | 75 |
| The presence of informative signage and maps | 4 | 50 |
| Opportunities to experience nature (i.e. water front) | 3 | 38 |
| Opportunities for scenic views | 3 | 38 |
| Places to rest (i.e. tables, benches) | 1 | 13 |
| Opportunities to learn about Valdez history | 1 | 13 |

N = 8

Stakeholders indicated that *community access* and *conservation* held the greatest priority, while *economic gain* and *tourist access* held the least priority, in the successful development of Meals Hill for recreational purposes. *Education* was mentioned as moderate priority with a mean ranking of 2.80 (Figure 10; Table 18). Responses from interviewees supported these priorities as well. The most commonly mentioned considerations for development were *opportunities for community recreation* (81%) and *opportunities to engage in nature* (56%) (Table 19). *Avoiding overcrowding* and *connectivity to other trails* were also mentioned (Table 19) and support stakeholders' priority of *community access*.

Figure 10: Stakeholders' Priorities in the Development of Meals Hill

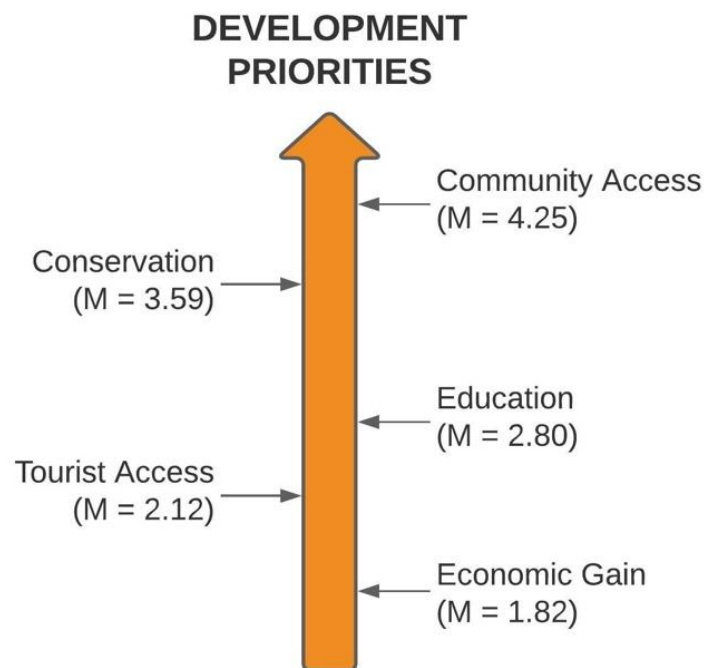


Table 18: Stakeholders' Priorities in the Successful Development of Meals Hill

| <i>Q: Please rank the following in order of priority regarding the successful development of Meals Hill for recreational purposes.</i> | M | SD |
|--|----------|-----------|
| Community Access | 4.25 | 1.0 |
| Conservation | 3.59 | 1.38 |
| Education | 2.80 | 1.0 |
| Tourist Access | 2.12 | 1.14 |
| Economic Gain | 1.82 | 1.35 |

N = 352

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Table 19: What Does the Ideal Development of Meals Hill Look Like (Interview Question)?

| <i>Q: What would the ideal development of MH as a park look like to you?</i> | Frequency | Percent |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Opportunities for community recreation (e.g. Mtn. biking trails, hiking, ice climbing) | 13 | 81 |
| Opportunities to engage in nature | 9 | 56 |
| Avoiding over crowding | 5 | 31 |
| Connectivity to other trails | 5 | 31 |
| Informative signs present (e.g. wildlife presence, trail maps, emergency access) | 4 | 25 |
| Multi-use trails | 4 | 25 |
| Access for emergency response | 4 | 25 |
| Connectivity to the city | 3 | 19 |
| Opportunities for scenic views | 3 | 19 |
| Accessible opportunities for all (e.g. disabled, children) | 3 | 19 |
| Serving as an economic attraction for the city | 3 | 19 |
| Proper maintenance and cleanliness | 3 | 19 |
| Restrooms available | 2 | 13 |
| Presence of Valdez history | 2 | 13 |
| Prioritizing conservation | 1 | 6 |
| Allowing dogs on trails | 1 | 6 |
| Ropes course | 1 | 6 |
| One central location in which everything branches from | 1 | 6 |
| Parking lot | 1 | 6 |

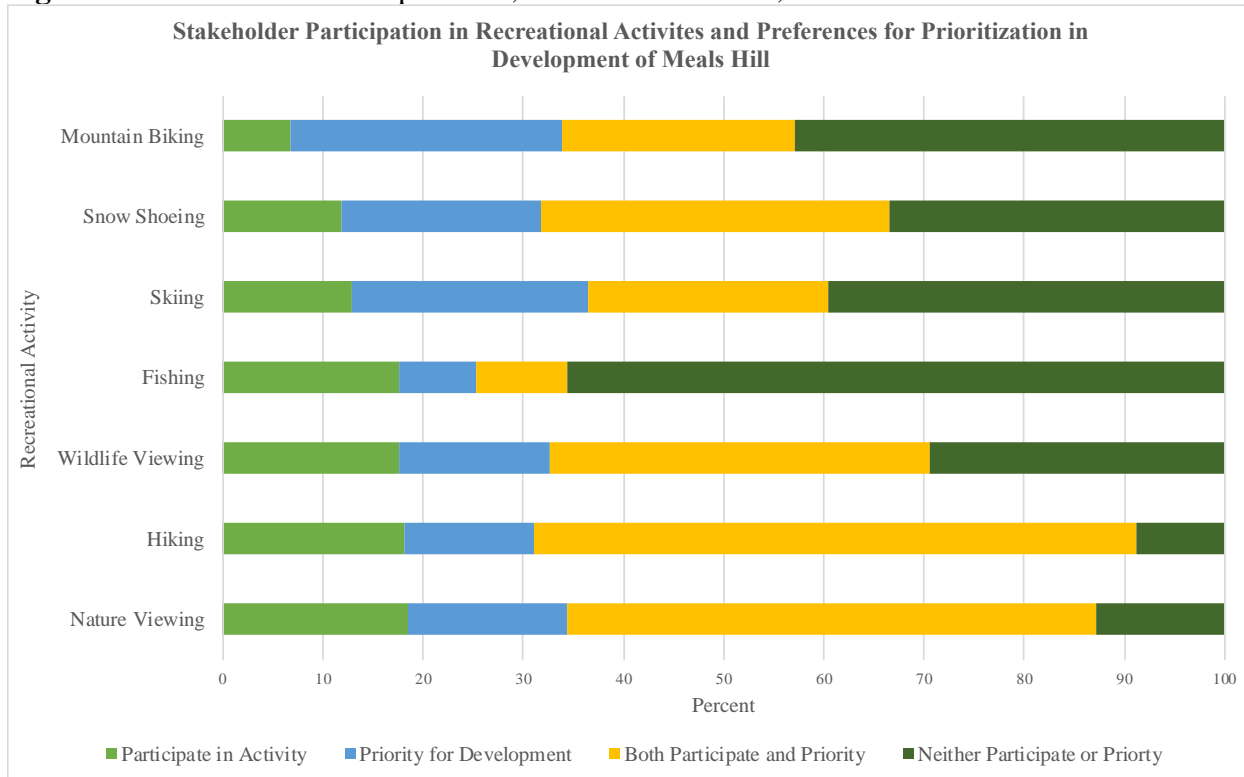
N = 16

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Fifty percent or more of stakeholders indicated that hiking (73%), nature viewing (69%), snow shoeing (55%), wildlife viewing (53%), and mountain biking (50%) should be prioritized in the development of Meals Hill (Figure 11). Approximately 30% and 25% of respondents indicated that although they do not currently participate in mountain biking or skiing respectively, they believe that activity should be a priority in development of Meals Hill (Figure 11). These two activities, with snow shoeing, had the fewest active participants of all activities listed (Figure 11).

Over 70% of stakeholders indicated that they do not participate in fishing. Only around 25% of stakeholders think fishing should be a priority in development of Meals Hill. Conversely, though more than 70% of stakeholders indicated that they do not currently participate in mountain biking, about 50% of stakeholders feel it should be a priority for development (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Stakeholder Participation in, and Preferences for, Recreational Activities



N = 352

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Importance of park design features were ranked by respondents on a scale of 1 (not at all important) to (5 extremely important). The most important features to the total sample were *trash and recycling bins* (M=4.36, SD=1.02), *kid friendly options* (M=4.06, SD=1.12), and *allowing pets on the trail* (M=4.06, SD=1.23). Of the three trail lengths mentioned, moderate trail length (1.5 - 3 miles) was indicated as the most important (M=4.07, SD=1.07). *Visible park staff* (M=2.10, SD=1.14), *designated camping area* (M=2.39, SD=1.39), *parking lot* (M=2.78, SD=1.48), and *opportunities for group events* (M=2.88, SD=1.37) were not considered important by the entire respondent sample (Table 20).

To explore the importance of specific park characteristics further, we split the stakeholder sample by frequency of park usage to investigate stakeholder priorities for everyday users (group A), multiple times per week users (group B), multiple times per month users (group C), and multiple times per year users (group D). Importance levels were then compared to identify significant differences between each group (Table 20). *Connections to trails outside of Meals Hill* was most important to multiple times per week users than to the two less frequent user groups ($p<.05$). *Signs along trails* ($p<.05$) and *picnic areas* ($p<.05$) were less important to everyday users than to all other user groups ($p<.05$). *Visible park staff presence* was significantly more important to infrequent users (group D) than to any of the other use groups, but still not highly important ($p<.01$; M=2.4). *Parking lot* was indicated as important only by infrequent users (groups D). *Short trails* were significantly less important to every day users than other use groups ($p>.01$). Every day users preferred *moderate length* and *long length* trail options (Table 20).

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Table 20: Important Park Characteristics in the Successful Development of Meals Hill:
Frequency of Use Groups

| <i>Q: How important are each of the following park characteristics in the successful development of Meals Hill?</i> | Total N = 352 | A Everyday Users N = 34 | B Multiple Times Per Week N = 123 | C Multiple Times Per Month N = 92 | D Multiple Times Per Year N = 80 | Post Hoc (LSD) |
|---|-------------------------|---|--|--|---|-------------------------|
| | M (SD) | M (SD) | M (SD) | M (SD) | M (SD) | |
| Trash and recycling bins | 4.36 (1.02) | 4.33 (0.96) | 4.31 (0.96) | 4.31 (1.10) | 4.54 (0.95) | NS |
| Moderate length trails (1.5 - 3 miles) | 4.07 (1.07) | 3.76 (1.30) | 4.21 (0.95) | 4.06 (1.15) | 4.09 (0.98) | NS |
| Kid friendly options | 4.06 (1.12) | 3.75 (1.14) | 4.00 (1.14) | 4.07 (1.14) | 4.25 (1.14) | NS |
| Allowing pets on trails | 3.95 (1.23) | 4.28 (1.17) | 3.97 (1.24) | 3.97 (1.22) | 3.89 (1.24) | NS |
| Long trails (3+ miles) | 3.85 (1.21) | 3.74 (1.29) | 4.14 (1.12) | 3.73 (1.24) | 3.80 (1.16) | NS |
| Short trails (less than 1.5 miles)** | 3.85 (1.20) | 3.13 (1.38) | 3.94 (1.19) | 3.87 (1.12) | 3.99 (1.11) | A<B** A<C** A<D** |
| Picnic area* | 3.64 (1.27) | 3.00 (1.51) | 3.72 (1.20) | 3.56 (1.27) | 3.87 (1.20) | A<B** A<C* A<D** |
| Access to waterfront* | 3.59 (1.37) | 3.06 (1.39) | 3.81 (1.34) | 3.49 (1.43) | 3.59 (1.26) | A<B** |
| Trails designated for specific users (ex. hiking or mountain biking instead of multi-use) | 3.50 (1.39) | 3.34 (1.47) | 3.74 (1.38) | 3.38 (1.46) | 3.49 (1.21) | NS |
| Connections to trails outside of Meals Hill* | 3.50 (1.20) | 3.33 (1.38) | 3.78 (1.11) | 3.35 (1.26) | 3.41 (1.02) | C<B** D<B* |
| Wheelchair accessibility | 3.40 (1.17) | 3.24 (1.26) | 3.26 (1.17) | 3.56 (1.11) | 3.54 (1.16) | NS |

* = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; Darker shades indicate higher importance of items
NS = No significance

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Table 20: Important Park Characteristics in the Successful Development of Meals Hill:
Frequency of Use Groups (Continued)

| <i>Q: How important are each of the following park characteristics in the successful development of Meals Hill?</i> | Total N = 352 | A Everyday Users N = 34 | B Multiple Times Per Week N = 123 | C Multiple Times Per Month N = 92 | D Multiple Times Per Year N = 80 | Post Hoc (LSD) |
|---|-------------------------|---|--|--|---|--------------------------|
| | M (SD) | M (SD) | M (SD) | M (SD) | M (SD) | |
| Signs along trails* | 3.39 (1.25) | 2.81 (1.38) | 3.41 (1.27) | 3.36 (1.22) | 3.65 (1.18) | A<B* A<C* A<D** |
| Opportunities for group events (ex. festivals)** | 2.88 (1.37) | 2.00 (1.26) | 3.05 (1.45) | 2.87 (1.33) | 2.99 (1.22) | A<B*** A<C** A<D** |
| Parking lot** | 2.78 (1.48) | 2.47 (1.57) | 2.48 (1.40) | 2.71 (1.47) | 3.20 (1.45) | A<D* B<D** C<D* |
| Designated camping area | 2.39 (1.39) | 1.87 (1.36) | 2.40 (1.44) | 2.25 (1.30) | 2.60 (1.37) | NS |
| Visible park staff presence** | 2.10 (1.14) | 1.66 (1.04) | 1.90 (0.99) | 2.10 (1.11) | 2.41 (1.30) | A<D** B<D** |

* = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Darker shades indicate higher importance of items.

NS = No significance

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Responses were split by recreational user groups to identify differences in their preferences (Table 21). All user groups indicated *picnic areas* were important except for hikers which represented the largest of the seven user groups. *Visible park staff* were not important to any user groups but least important for mountain bikers (M=1.86, SD=1.05). *Moderate trail lengths* were most important for every user group, especially those who participate in wildlife viewing (M=4.20, 0.96). Long trails were important to all groups as well and most important for skiers (M=4.07, SD=1.11). *Trails designated for specific uses* were important for all user groups and most important for mountain bikers (M=3.74, SD=1.33). Of all user groups, *access to waterfront* (M=3.75, SD=1.34), *kid friendly activities* (M=4.14, SD=1.22), and *trash and recycling bins* (M=4.53, SD=0.80) were most important to respondents who participate in fishing (Table 21).

Table 21: Important Park Characteristics in the Successful Development of Meals Hill: Recreational User Groups

| <i>Q: How important are each of the following park characteristics in the successful development of Meals Hill?</i> | Total N=352 | Hiking N=276 | Skiing N=130 | Mtn. Biking N=106 | Snow-Shoeing N=164 | Fishing N=94 | Nature Viewing N=251 | Wildlife Viewing N=195 |
|---|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | M (SD) | M (SD) | M (SD) | M (SD) | M (SD) | M (SD) | M (SD) | M (SD) |
| Trash and recycling bins | 4.36 (1.02) | 4.36 (0.96) | 4.31 (1.05) | 4.34 (0.93) | 4.36 (0.97) | 4.53 (0.80) | 4.40 (0.95) | 4.48 (0.83) |
| Moderate length trails (1.5 - 3 miles) | 4.07 (1.07) | 4.13 (1.05) | 4.19 (1.04) | 4.12 (1.12) | 4.15 (1.09) | 4.02 (1.12) | 4.14 (1.03) | 4.20 (0.96) |
| Kid friendly options | 4.06 (1.12) | 4.04 (1.14) | 3.90 (1.24) | 3.91 (1.24) | 4.00 (1.16) | 4.14 (1.22) | 4.06 (1.11) | 4.11 (1.09) |
| Allowing pets on trails | 3.95 (1.23) | 3.93 (1.22) | 4.02 (1.24) | 3.84 (1.32) | 4.00 (1.19) | 3.73 (1.38) | 3.91 (1.20) | 3.91 (1.21) |
| Long trails (3+ miles) | 3.85 (1.21) | 3.91 (1.19) | 4.07 (1.11) | 3.99 (1.11) | 4.03 (1.14) | 3.77 (1.27) | 3.87 (1.19) | 3.97 (1.12) |
| Short trails (less than 1.5 miles) | 3.85 (1.20) | 3.84 (1.20) | 3.81 (1.18) | 3.76 (1.24) | 3.82 (1.20) | 3.93 (1.14) | 3.95 (1.11) | 4.06 (1.02) |

Darker shades indicate higher importance of items.

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Table 21: Important Park Characteristics in the Successful Development of Meals Hill: Recreational User Groups (Continued)

| <i>Q: How important are each of the following park characteristics in the successful development of Meals Hill?</i> | Total N=352 | Hiking N=276 | Skiing N=130 | Mtn. Biking N=106 | Snow-Shoeing N=164 | Fishing N=94 | Nature Viewing N=251 | Wildlife Viewing N=195 |
|---|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | M (SD) | M (SD) | M (SD) | M (SD) | M (SD) | M (SD) | M (SD) | M (SD) |
| Picnic area | 3.64 (1.27) | 2.60 (1.27) | 3.30 (1.32) | 3.55 (1.22) | 3.54 (1.29) | 3.74 (1.23) | 3.66 (1.22) | 3.73 (1.19) |
| Access to waterfront | 3.59 (1.37) | 3.58 (1.35) | 3.57 (1.34) | 3.45 (1.41) | 3.48 (1.34) | 3.75 (1.34) | 3.60 (1.36) | 3.64 (1.31) |
| Trails designated for specific users (ex. hiking or mountain biking instead of multi-use) | 3.50 (1.39) | 3.54 (1.39) | 3.68 (1.38) | 3.74 (1.33) | 3.57 (1.37) | 3.43 (1.45) | 3.59 (1.36) | 3.60 (1.34) |
| Connections to trails outside of Meals Hill | 3.50 (1.20) | 3.52 (1.17) | 3.77 (1.08) | 3.67 (1.12) | 3.56 (1.16) | 3.40 (1.22) | 3.50 (1.15) | 3.47 (1.15) |
| Wheelchair accessibility | 3.40 (1.17) | 3.42 (1.15) | 3.28 (1.20) | 3.19 (1.16) | 3.39 (1.16) | 3.41 (1.14) | 3.42 (1.12) | 3.51 (1.12) |
| Signs along trails | 3.39 (1.25) | 3.38 (1.26) | 3.25 (1.24) | 3.24 (1.22) | 3.29 (1.24) | 3.54 (1.24) | 3.41 (1.23) | 3.51 (1.18) |
| Opportunities for group events (ex. festivals) | 2.88 (1.37) | 2.84 (1.34) | 2.79 (1.44) | 2.88 (1.35) | 2.88 (1.32) | 3.00 (1.38) | 2.89 (1.34) | 2.89 (1.31) |
| Parking lot | 2.78 (1.48) | 2.75 (1.46) | 2.66 (1.44) | 2.66 (1.44) | 2.62 (1.44) | 3.08 (1.52) | 2.77 (1.49) | 2.81 (1.49) |
| Designated camping area | 2.39 (1.39) | 2.35 (1.39) | 2.28 (1.39) | 2.32 (1.37) | 2.27 (1.31) | 2.59 (1.35) | 2.36 (1.37) | 2.46 (1.39) |
| Visible park staff presence | 2.10 (1.14) | 2.08 (1.15) | 1.94 (1.10) | 1.86 (1.05) | 1.92 (1.03) | 2.27 (1.16) | 2.09 (1.14) | 2.15 (1.14) |

Darker shades indicate higher importance of items.

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Social acceptability was measured using photos of varying social scenarios on top of Meals Hill (See Photo 3 and 4 for examples). Stakeholders (N = 352) indicated a high degree of acceptability in encountering little or no other users when accessing the top of Meals Hill. Further, stakeholders indicated a diminishing quality of their experience as encounters with others increased. At 4 users, the standard deviation crosses the neutral line representing many responses that indicated diminishing acceptability. Encountering 8+ users was indicated as unacceptable when accessing the top of Meals Hill (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Stakeholders' Social Acceptability of People on Top of Meals Hill

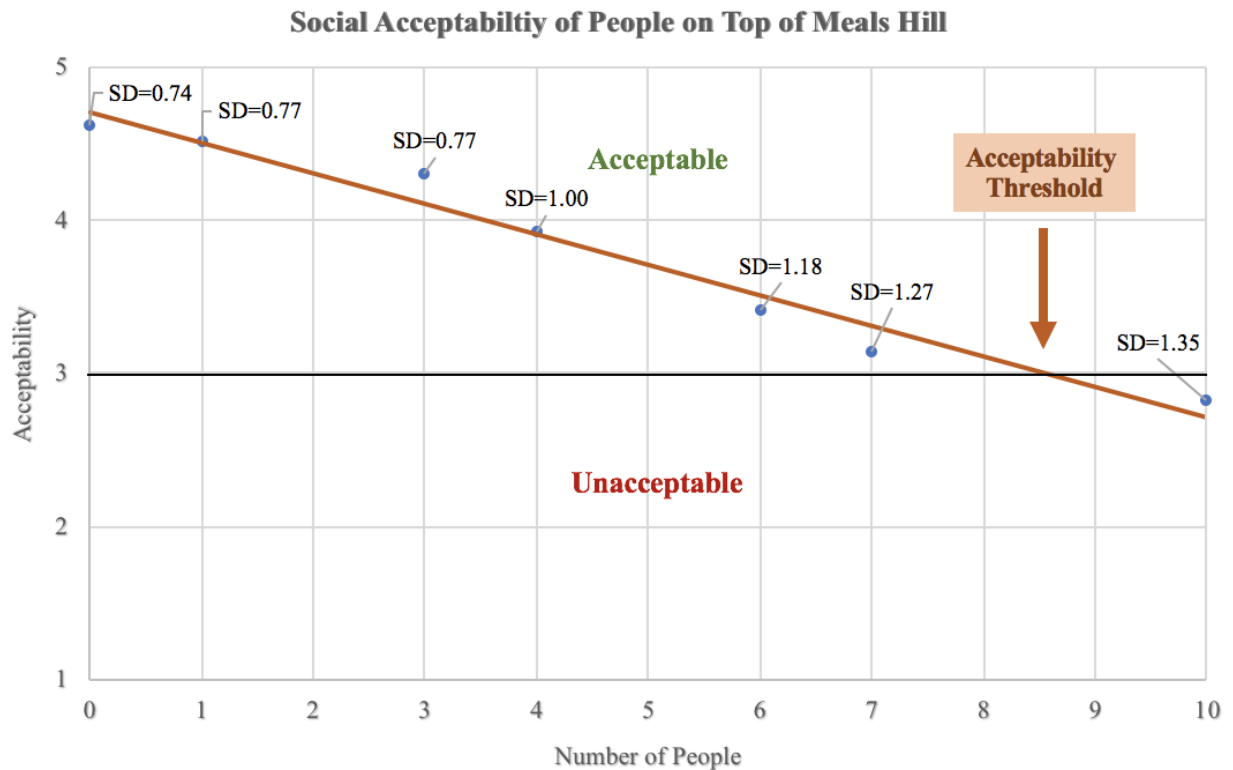


Photo 3: No Users on Meals Hill



Photo 4: Ten Users on Meals Hill



Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

At the group-level, encountering 8+ users was indicated as unacceptable when accessing the top of Meals Hill (Figure 12). However, individual stakeholders indicated perceptions of unacceptable social encounters at all measurements. Fifty four percent indicated encounters with 10 other users, 50% indicated encounters with 7 other users, and 45% indicated encounters with 6 other users as unacceptable (Table 22).

Table 22: Stakeholders' Perceptions of Unacceptable Social Encounters on Top of Meals Hill

| Number of Other Users Encountered on Top of Meals Hill | Frequency Indicated Unacceptable | Percent Indicated Unacceptable |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| 10 other users | 191 | 54 |
| 7 other users | 177 | 50 |
| 6 other users | 157 | 45 |
| 4 other users | 111 | 32 |
| 3 other users | 60 | 17 |
| 1 other user | 40 | 11 |
| No other users | 27 | 8 |

N = 352

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Stakeholders indicated *overnight campers* (M=2.84, SD=1.22) as the only unacceptable item to encounter. *A large group of tourists* (M=3.27, SD=1.13), *noise from others* (M=3.32, SD=1.03), and *park enforcement* (M=3.50, SD=1.08) were the other least acceptable park elements to encounter while hiking on a nature-based trail in Valdez during the summer season, though they still ranked above neutral (3.00). *Hikers with dogs* (M=4.28, SD=0.83), *no other hikers* (M=4.26, SD=1.01), and *a school group* (M=4.14, SD=0.84) were indicated as the three most acceptable encounters (Table 23).

Table 23: Stakeholders' Acceptability of Recreational Encounters: Ranked

| <i>Q: During the summer season, if you are hiking on a nature-based trail in Valdez, how acceptable would it be to encounter each of the following?</i> | M | SD |
|---|----------|-----------|
| Hikers with dogs | 4.28 | 0.83 |
| No-one else | 4.26 | 1.01 |
| A school group | 4.14 | 0.84 |
| A bear | 3.89 | 1.07 |
| Mountain bikers | 3.80 | 0.96 |
| A fallen tree on the trail | 3.68 | 1.04 |
| Park enforcement | 3.50 | 1.08 |
| Noise from others | 3.32 | 1.03 |
| A large group of tourists | 3.27 | 1.13 |
| Overnight campers | 2.84 | 1.22 |

1 = Totally Unacceptable 5 = Totally Acceptable

N = 352

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

During interviews, stakeholders indicated characteristics of Valdez visitors that should be considered in development. An *older population compared to other port cities* (63%), *elevated need for adaptations regarding accessibility* (50%), *adventure seekers* (50%), and *pet owners* searching for outdoor opportunities to share with their pets (50%) were the four most frequently indicated characteristics (Table 24).

Table 24: What Characteristics of Visitors Should be Considered in Developing Meals Hill (Interview Question)?

| <i>Q: What characteristics of visitors should be considered in developing Meals Hill as a park in Valdez?</i> | Frequency | Percent |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Older population compared to other port cities | 5 | 63 |
| Elevated need for adaptations regarding accessibility | 4 | 50 |
| Adventure seeking | 4 | 50 |
| Pet owners (looking for place to walk their dogs) | 4 | 50 |
| Traveling via recreational vehicle (AKA: RV) | 3 | 38 |
| Bike riders (bicycles) | 3 | 38 |
| Time constrained | 2 | 25 |
| Interested in cost-effective opportunities | 2 | 25 |

N = 8

Stakeholders' Concerns Held and Challenges Experienced

Stakeholders indicated a range of concerns regarding the development of Meals Hill with *sustainability* (74%), *ecological* (48%), and *user* (34%) concerns indicated most frequently. Each concern category, and operationalized examples of each, are presented below (Figure 13; Table 25). Table 25 provides examples of specific concerns stakeholders shared regarding the development of Meals Hill.

In general, stakeholders who were born in Valdez expressed similar concerns as the entire stakeholder group. *Sustainability* was the greatest concern among those born in Valdez and was indicated by 34% of that group (Figure 13). Though mentioned as concerns for all stakeholders, *accessibility* and *safety* were mentioned by less than 5% of each group (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Stakeholders' Concern Regarding the Development of Meals Hill

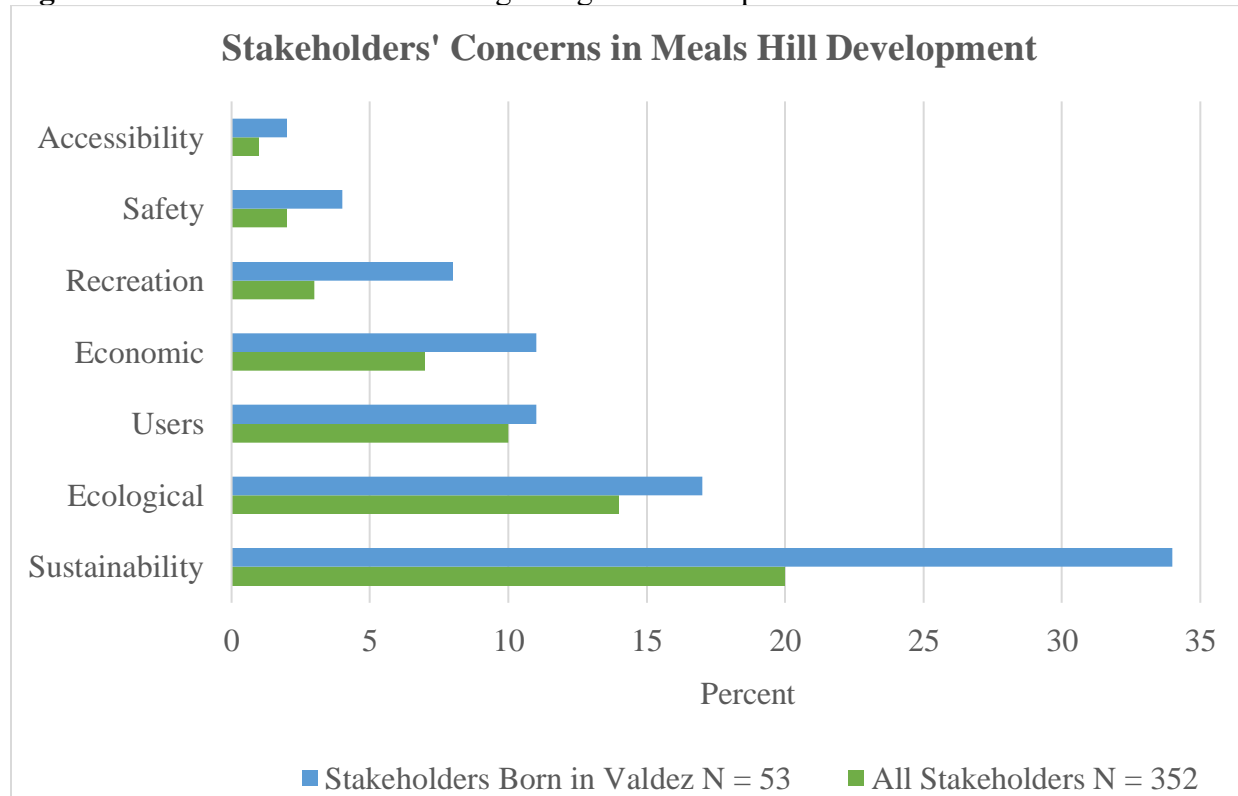


Table 25: Stakeholders' Concerns Regarding the Development of Meals Hill

| Concern Categories | Examples Provided by Stakeholders |
|--------------------|--|
| Sustainability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of long-term plan or vision • Maintenance costs • Motorized use on property • Developed as a ski hill <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Stakeholders do not want another ski hill • Development prioritizing tourists • Under development • Lack of, or poor, signage • Poorly designed trails • Not considering youth in development • Pulling use from other trails • Lack of historical presence • Distributing property for private ownership • Over management • Modernizing Valdez • No out house/toilet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Stakeholders desire facilities • Not utilizing local expertise and labor in development |
| Ecological | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental degradation • Over clearing vegetation • Disturbing animal habitats • Fire hazard • Human wildlife interactions |
| Users | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trash • Overnight campers • Crowding • Taboo forms of recreation • Dog waste • Losing privacy and solitude • Special-interest groups taking over • Noise |
| Economic | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing an economic development opportunity • Wrong direction for city growth • City going over budget |
| Recreation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of single use opportunities • Prioritizing specific recreation users • Lack of unique recreation (i.e. zip line) |
| Safety | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human/wildlife interactions (bears) • Fires |
| Accessibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility for all • Community not having access • Kid friendly opportunities |

N = 352

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

During interviews, *environmental degradation* (25%), *overcrowding of tourists* (19%), and changes in Valdez culture (19%) were the three most frequently indicated concerns stakeholders held regarding the development of Meals Hill as a park (Table 26).

Table 26: Stakeholders' Concerns Regarding the Development of Meals Hill (Interview Question)

| <i>Q: Do you have any concerns regarding the development of Meals Hill?</i> | Frequency | Percent |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Environmental degradation | 4 | 25 |
| Overcrowding of tourist | 3 | 19 |
| Changing Valdez culture (small town feel) | 3 | 19 |
| Revenue leaving Valdez | 1 | 6 |
| Disturbing wildlife habitats | 1 | 6 |
| People walking onto private property around park | 1 | 6 |
| Public safety regarding hazardous terrain | 1 | 6 |
| Emergency response access | 1 | 6 |

N = 16

Photo 5: Meals Hill View of Harbor



Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Stakeholders indicated a *lack of recreation opportunities* (9%), *accessibility* (7%), and *poor maintenance* (7%) as the most common challenges experienced in accessing nature-based recreation activities in Valdez. To explore these challenges further, we split the stakeholder sample into two groups (ages 18 – 47 and 48 – 76 years). Stakeholders ages 18 – 47 years indicated a *lack of recreation opportunities* (9%), *poor maintenance* (7%), and *accessibility* (4%) most frequently. Stakeholders ages 48 – 76 indicated *accessibility* (13%), *users* (9%), and a *lack of recreation opportunities* (7%) as challenges experienced most frequently (Table 27). During stakeholder interviews, *inclement weather* (31%), *poor trail maintenance* (25%), *accessibility* (19%), and *user behaviors* (19%) were the four most frequently indicated barriers experienced in participating in nature-based recreation in Valdez (Table 28).

Table 27: Challenges Stakeholders Experience Accessing Nature-Based Recreation in Valdez

| <i>Q: Do you experience any challenges in accessing nature-based recreation activities in Valdez?</i> | Examples Provided by Stakeholders | Frequency (Percent) | | |
|---|---|-----------------------------|--|--|
| | | All Stakeholders N = 352 | Stakeholders Ages 18 – 47 years N = 230 | Stakeholders Ages 48 – 76 years N = 122 |
| Lack of Recreation Opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mountain biking trails Loop trails Trails accessing alpine Motorized-use trails Long trails Short trails Kid friendly options Shore fishing locations Kayak launches Wildlife-viewing Guided opportunities Access to water front | 30 (9) | 21 (9) | 9 (7) |
| Accessibility (ADA) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical ability Uneven terrain Parking Places to rest | 25 (7) | 9 (4) | 16 (13) |

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Table 27: Challenges Stakeholders Experience Accessing Nature-Based Recreation in Valdez (Continued)

| <i>Q: Do you experience any challenges in accessing nature-based recreation activities in Valdez?</i> | Examples Provided by Stakeholders | Frequency (Percent) | | |
|---|---|------------------------------------|---|---|
| | | All Stakeholders N = 352 | Stakeholders Ages 18 – 47 years N = 230 | Stakeholders Ages 48 – 76 years N = 122 |
| Poor maintenance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over-growth • Amenities better outside of Valdez • ATV damage • Inconsistent ski trail grooming in winter • Drainage issues | 24 (7) | 16 (7) | 8 (7) |
| Users | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trash • Dog waste • User conflicts (motorized users) • Toilet paper • Crowding | 18 (5) | 7 (3) | 11 (9) |
| Safety | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human-wildlife interactions • Motorized vehicles as hazards • Hiking on road | 16 (5) | 8 (3) | 8 (7) |
| Information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor quality or lack of signs • Unaware of opportunities | 9 (3) | 7 (3) | 2 (2) |
| Time restraints | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of short recreation opportunities (lunch break) | 3 (1) | 3 (1) | 0 (0) |
| Inclement Weather | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snow • Rain • Mud | 3 (1) | 2 (1) | 1 (1) |
| Transportation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessing out-of-town trails | 3 (1) | 2 (1) | 1 (1) |

N = 352

Table 28: Challenges Stakeholders Experience Accessing Nature-Based Recreation in Valdez (Interview Question)

| <i>Q: Do you currently experience any barriers in participating in nature-based recreation in Valdez?</i> | Frequency | Percent |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Inclement weather | 5 | 31 |
| Poor trail maintenance | 4 | 25 |
| Accessibility (ADA) | 3 | 19 |
| User behaviors (trash, dog waste) | 3 | 19 |
| Transportation | 2 | 13 |

N = 16

During interviews, representatives of visitor agencies indicated *transportation* (63%), *information* about opportunities (50%), and *time restrictions* (25%) as the three barriers most frequently experienced by past visitors in accessing nature-based recreation in Valdez (Table 29).

Table 29: Barriers Visitors Have Experienced Accessing Nature-Based Recreation in Valdez (Interview Question)

| <i>Q: What barriers have past visitors indicated they have experienced in accessing nature-based recreation opportunities Valdez?</i> | Frequency | Percent |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Transportation | 5 | 63 |
| Information (signs, blazes, and maps) | 4 | 50 |
| Time restrictions | 2 | 25 |
| Cost effective opportunities | 1 | 13 |
| Fear of wildlife interactions | 1 | 13 |
| Lack of loop trails | 1 | 13 |
| Poorly maintained areas | 1 | 13 |
| Trails requiring you walk on the road | 1 | 13 |

N = 8

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Stakeholders indicated *trash* (39%), *dog waste* (37%), *recreationist behaving dangerously* (13%), and *users not practicing Leave No Trace policies* (13%) as the four biggest issues related to trail etiquette they would like to see improved in Valdez (Table 30).

All interviewees indicated that they had previously encountered wildlife at Meals Hill (Table 31) and indicated a range of wildlife species sighted (Table 32). However, Only 4 interviewees (25%) expressed concerns regarding wildlife which were related to bears (Table 33).

Table 30: Biggest Issues Related to Trail Etiquette Stakeholders Would Like Improved

| <i>Q: What are the biggest issues related to trail etiquette, if any, that you would like to see improved in Valdez?</i> | Frequency | Percent |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Trash | 75 | 39 |
| Dog waste | 71 | 37 |
| Pets off leash | 36 | 19 |
| Recreationist behaving dangerously (motorized users and mountain bikers) | 26 | 13 |
| Users not practicing LNT (degradation of the environment) | 25 | 13 |
| Poor trail manners (e.g. hogging center of trail) | 13 | 7 |
| Overgrowth/Poor maintenance | 13 | 7 |
| Utilizing motorized vehicles off designated trails | 13 | 7 |

N = 352

Table 31: Have Stakeholders Encountered Wildlife on Meals Hill (Interview Question)?

| <i>Q: Have you encountered wildlife while using the property?</i> | Frequency | Percent |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Yes | 16 | 100 |
| No | 0 | 0 |

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Table 32: What Species of Wildlife Have Stakeholders Encountered on Meals Hill (Interview Question)?

| <i>Q: What species?</i> | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Bears | 8 | 50 |
| Marmots | 2 | 13 |
| Deer | 2 | 13 |
| Coyote | 2 | 13 |
| Porcupines | 1 | 6 |
| Fox | 1 | 6 |
| Migratory birds | 1 | 6 |
| Eagles | 1 | 6 |

N = 16

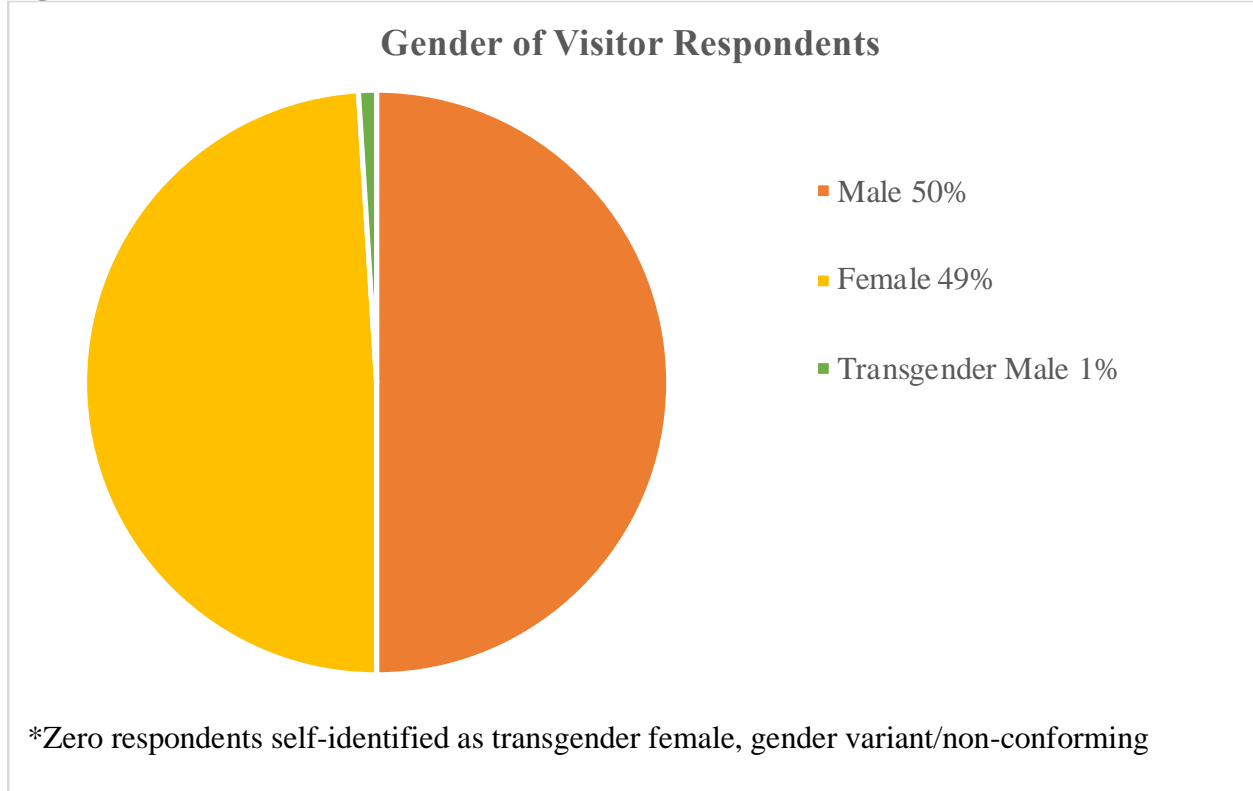
Table 33: Are Wildlife Encounters a Concern for Stakeholders Recreating in Valdez (Interview Question)?

| <i>Q: Are wildlife encounters a concern for you when considering recreating at Meals Hill?</i> | Frequency | Percent |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Yes (bears) | 4 | 25 |

N = 16

VISITOR SURVEY DATA**Understanding Valdez Visitors**

Males made up 50% of our visitor sample (Figure 14). Visitors ranged in age from 18 to 76 years old (M = 41; Figure 15). *White, not of Hispanic descent* was the most frequently indicated race representing 87% of our sample (Figure 16).

Figure 14: Visitor Gender Data

N = 76

Figure 15: Visitor Age Data

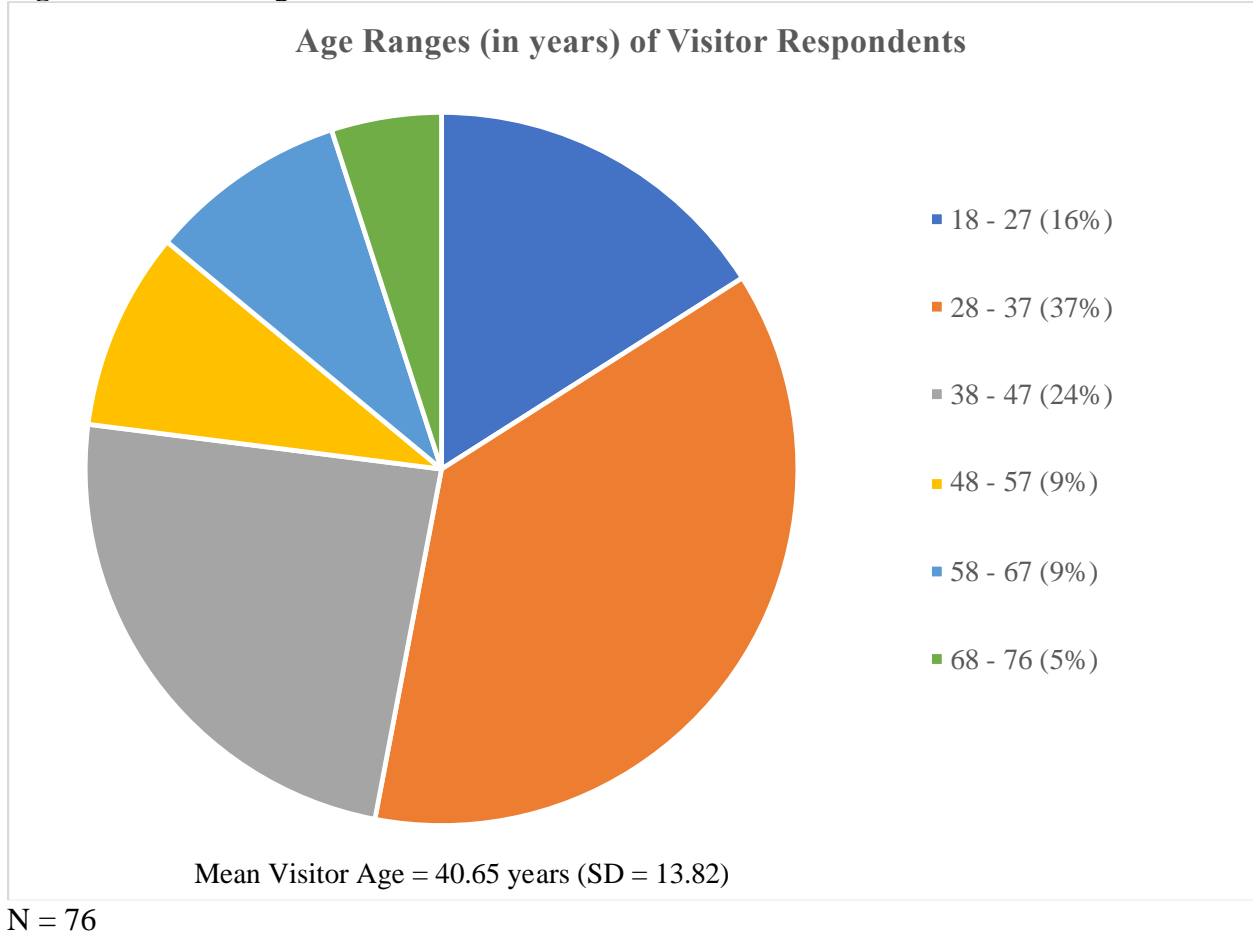
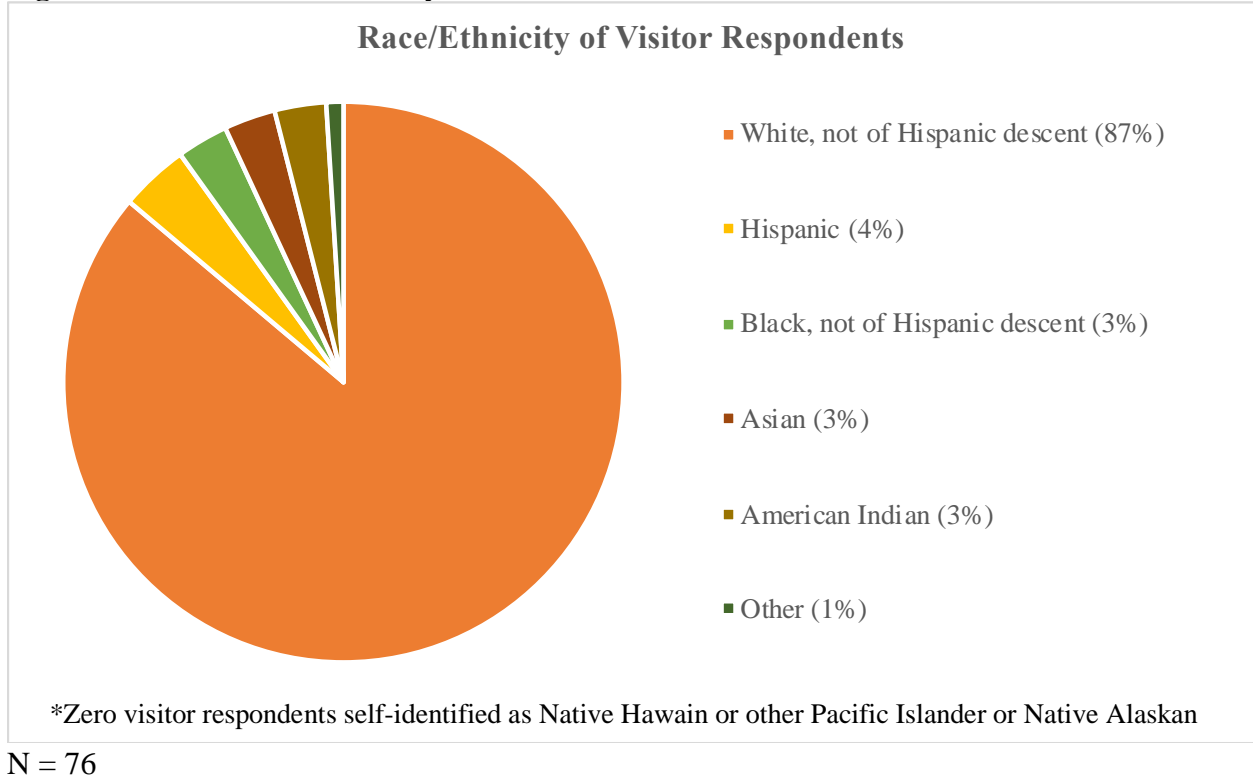


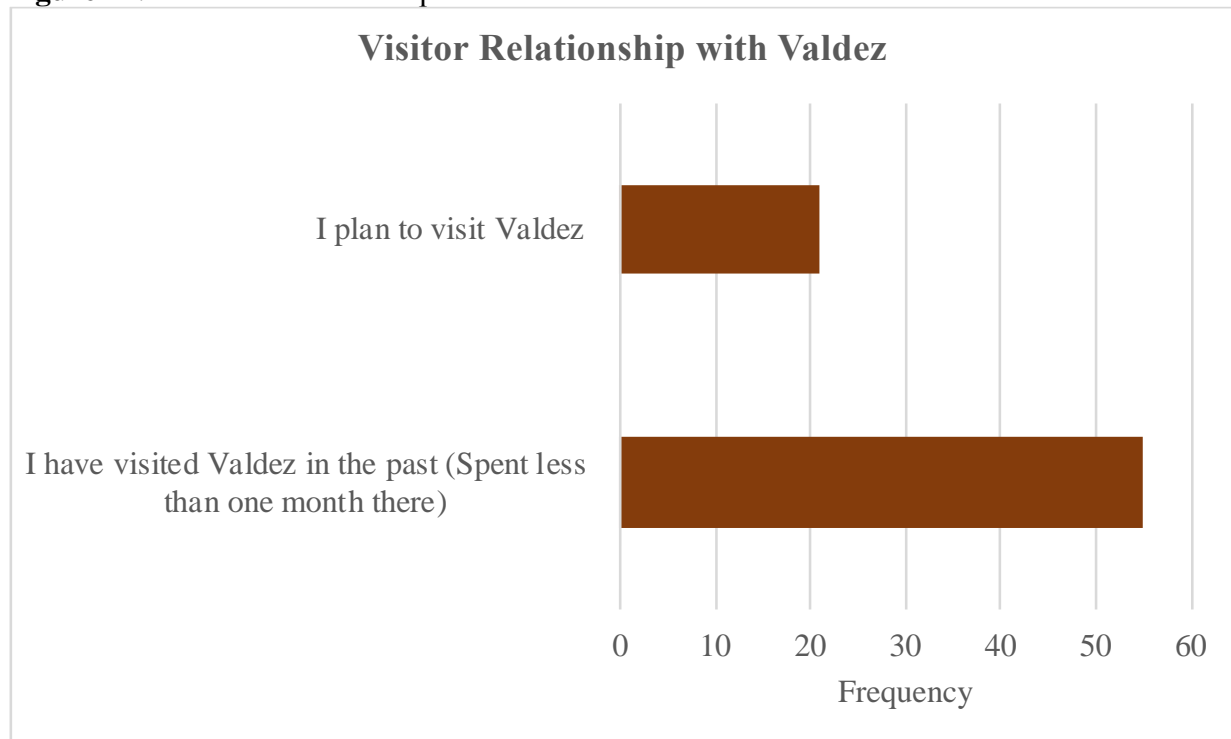
Figure 16: Visitor Race/Ethnicity Data



Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Seventy two percent of visitor respondents indicated they had *visited Valdez in the past and spent less than one month there* (Figure 17). The other 28% of the sample indicated that they *plan to visit Valdez in the future* (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Visitors' Relationship to Valdez

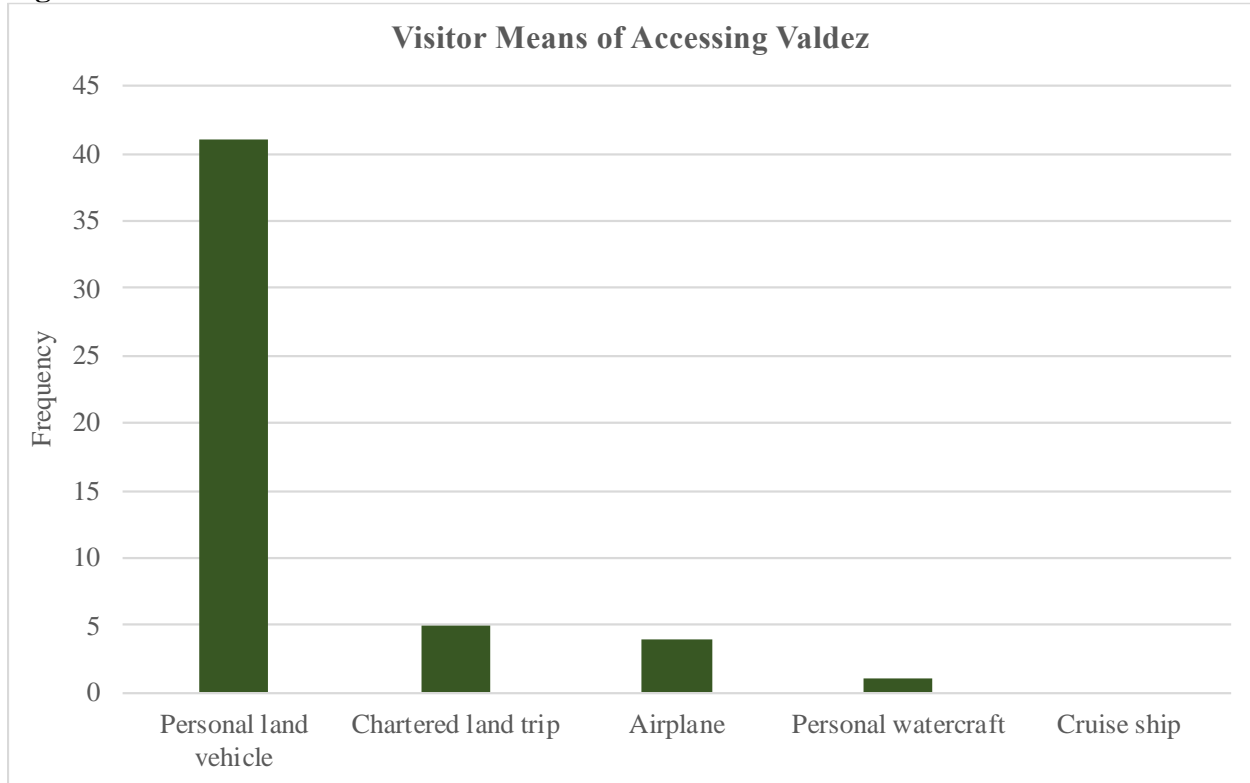


N = 76

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

From the visitors who had previously visited Valdez (N = 55), 75% indicated they had visited via *personal land vehicle*, 9% via a *chartered land trip*, and 7% by *airplane* (Figure 18). Notably, no respondents indicated that they had accessed Valdez via cruise ship.

Figure 18: How Did Visitors Visit Valdez?

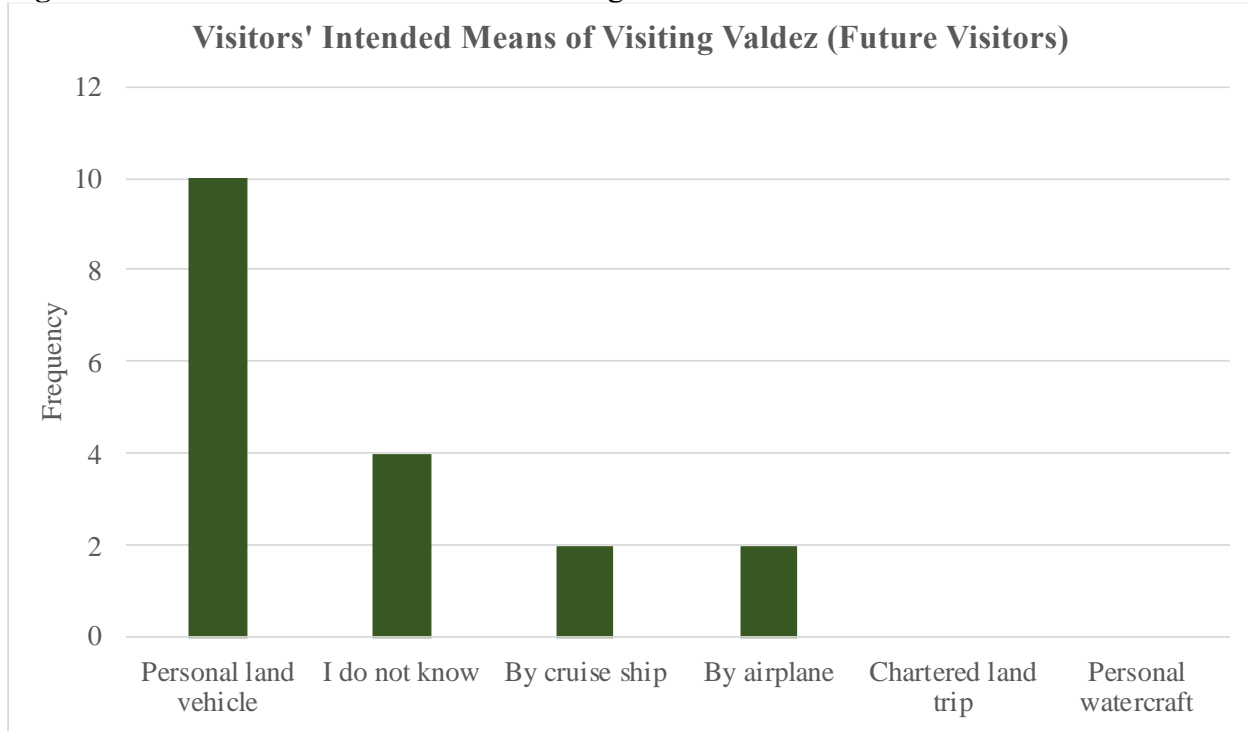


N = 55

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Of the 28% of visitors who plan to visit Valdez in the future, *personal land vehicle* (15%), unaware of how they will travel (6%), *by cruise ship* (3%), and via airplane (3%) were the four most frequently indicated methods of transportation (Figure 19).

Figure 19. Visitors' Intended Means of Visiting Valdez



N=21

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Opportunities to see natural scenery (67%), opportunities to see wildlife (55%), and opportunities to recreate in nature (51%) were the three most frequently indicated motivations for visitors traveling to Valdez and the only reasons indicated by more than 50% of the sample (Table 34).

Table 34: Visitors' Motivations for Visiting Valdez

| <i>Q: What was your motivation for traveling to Valdez, AK?</i> | Frequency | Percent |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| To see natural scenery | 51 | 67 |
| To see wildlife | 42 | 55 |
| Opportunities to recreate in nature | 39 | 51 |
| To pursue a particular recreational activity | 14 | 18 |
| Bucket list trip | 11 | 14 |
| Employment related | 10 | 13 |
| To visit friends or family | 9 | 12 |
| To learn about the Trans-Alaskan Pipeline System | 9 | 12 |
| Valdez was part of a trip package | 3 | 4 |

N = 76

*Total does not equal 100% because sample was asked to select all that apply.

Visitors' Participation in Nature-Based Recreation

From the visitors who had previously visited Valdez (N = 55), 82% indicated they had participated in nature-based recreation while visiting. Only 1 respondent indicated that they were not interested in nature-based recreation (Table 35).

Table 35: Did Visitors Participate in Nature-Based Recreation While Visiting?

| <i>Q: During your visit to Valdez, did you participate in nature-based recreation (ex. hiking)?</i> | Frequency | Percent |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Yes | 45 | 82 |
| No, but I would have liked to | 9 | 16 |
| No, I was not interested | 1 | 2 |

N = 55

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

From the visitors who had previously visited Valdez (N = 55), *trail hiking* (78%), *fishing* (44%), *paddling sports* (22%), and *camping* (20%) were the four most frequently indicated forms of nature-based recreation participated in while visiting (Table 36). Zero respondents indicated that they had participated in snow shoeing and only 1 respondent indicated they participated in swimming or rock climbing while in Valdez (Table 36).

Table 36: What Nature-Based Recreation Activities Did Past Visitor Do While Visiting Valdez?

| <i>Q: What did you do while participating in nature-based recreation in Valdez, AK?</i> | Frequency | Percent |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Trail hiking | 35 | 78 |
| Fishing | 20 | 44 |
| Paddling sports (ex. kayaking, rafting, Stand-Up Paddling) | 10 | 22 |
| Camping | 9 | 20 |
| Skiing or snowboarding | 6 | 13 |
| Birding | 6 | 13 |
| Mountain biking | 4 | 9 |
| Backpacking | 3 | 7 |
| Rock-climbing | 1 | 2 |
| Swimming | 1 | 2 |
| Snowshoeing | 0 | 0 |

N = 45

*Total does not equal 100% because sample was asked to select all that apply.

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Of the 20% of visitors who indicated they did not participate in nature-based recreation while visiting Valdez but would have liked to (N = 11), *I didn't have time* (45%), *I wasn't adequately prepared* (18%), and *I was unaware of opportunities* (18%) were the three most frequently indicated barriers (Table 37).

Of the future visitors to Valdez (N=21), all indicated plans or interest in participating in nature-based recreation on their trip (Table 38). Hiking was the most commonly planned activity for future visitors (33%) and 33% indicated they were not sure what their planned activity would be yet but they were interested in ideas (Table 39).

Table 37: What Prevented Past Visitors to Valdez From Participating in Nature-Based Recreation?

| <i>Q: What prevented you from participating in nature-based recreation?</i> | Frequency | Percent |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| I didn't have time | 5 | 45 |
| I wasn't adequately prepared (ex. clothing) | 2 | 18 |
| I was unaware of opportunities | 2 | 18 |
| Lack of accessible opportunities | 1 | 9 |
| Risk of encountering wildlife | 0 | 0 |
| Inclement weather | 0 | 0 |
| Limited transportation | 0 | 0 |

N = 11

*Total does not equal 100% because sample was asked to select all that apply.

Table 38: Do Future Visitors Plan to Participate in Nature-Based Recreation While Visiting?

| <i>Q: During your visit to Valdez, do you plan to participate in nature-based recreation (ex. hiking)?</i> | Frequency | Percent |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Yes | 20 | 95 |
| No, but I am interested | 1 | 5 |
| No, I am not interested | 0 | 0 |

N = 21

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Table 39: How Future Visitors Plan to Participate in Nature-Based Recreation While Visiting

| <i>Q: What do you plan to do while participating in nature-based recreation in Valdez, AK?</i> | Frequency | Percent |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Hiking | 6 | 33 |
| Not sure, looking for ideas | 6 | 33 |
| Fishing | 3 | 17 |
| Camping | 2 | 11 |
| Ice climbing | 2 | 11 |
| Paddle sports (i.e. kayaking) | 1 | 6 |
| Biking | 1 | 6 |
| Wildlife viewing | 1 | 6 |
| Mountain climbing | 1 | 6 |

N = 18

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Visitors indicated *opportunities for scenic views* (M=4.28, SD=0.73), *easy access to trails* (M=3.85, SD=0.89), *a chance of seeing wildlife* (M=3.66, SD=1.00), *quick recreational opportunities* (M=3.59, SD=1.04), and *clear signage directing visitors* (M=3.43, SD=1.05) as the five most influential elements in their participation in nature-based recreation (Table 40). *Proximity of nature area to other attractions* (M=2.68, SD=1.28), *Access to recreational equipment* (M=2.40, SD=1.10), *Kid friendly options* (M=2.38, SD=1.43), *Ability to use cellphone* (M=2.34, SD=1.27), *Access to guided services* (M=2.15, SD=1.20), and *ADA accessibility* (M=2.05, SD=1.43) were all indicated as not influential on participation in nature-based recreation by visitors (Table 40).

Table 40: Influential Elements for Visitors' Participation in Nature-Based Recreation

| <i>Q: Please indicate how influential each of the following are in your participation in nature-based recreation</i> | M | SD |
|--|----------|-----------|
| Opportunities for scenic views | 4.28 | 0.73 |
| Easy access to trails | 3.85 | 0.89 |
| Chance of seeing wildlife | 3.66 | 1.00 |
| Quick recreational opportunities (3 hours or less) | 3.59 | 1.04 |
| Clear signage directing visitors | 3.43 | 1.05 |
| Longer recreational opportunities (1/2 day+) | 3.22 | 1.02 |
| Opportunities to participate in new recreation activities | 3.21 | 1.15 |
| Proximity of nature area to other attractions (ex. shopping or restaurants) | 2.68 | 1.28 |
| Access to recreational equipment | 2.40 | 1.10 |
| Kid friendly options | 2.38 | 1.43 |
| Ability to use cellphone | 2.34 | 1.27 |
| Access to guided services | 2.15 | 1.20 |
| ADA accessibility | 2.05 | 1.43 |

N = 76

1 = Not at all Influential - 5 = Extremely Influential

Summary of Results

Stakeholders' Degree of Support Regarding the Development of Meals Hill

Stakeholders overwhelmingly support the development of Meals Hill and expressed excitement about the potential of the property as a non-motorized recreational use area. Seventy-three percent support additional development for non-motorized recreational opportunities, 18% support the improvement of existing infrastructure and only 9% of respondents do not support any development.

The Significance of Meals Hill for Stakeholders

Stakeholders shared a vision of Meals Hill as an exciting opportunity to establish a public image of Valdez with accessible nature-based recreation opportunities within close proximity of town. Stakeholders view Meals Hill as having the potential to provide a unique identity to Valdez for both stakeholders and visitors. When asked what makes Meals Hill special to stakeholders, scenic views (50%), close proximity to town (35%), and opportunities to engage in nature (32%) were indicated most frequently.

Regarding the significance of Meals Hill for the City of Valdez, stakeholders most frequently indicated opportunities to recreate in nature (43%). During interviews, stakeholders explained this significance further stating the importance of moderate to easy-difficulty outdoor recreation opportunities (e.g. mountain biking, snow shoeing; 81%), opportunities to experience undeveloped nature (56%), and an opportunity to attract visitors (50%). Historic and cultural significance was not significantly mentioned by stakeholders. However, the expressed vision of Meals Hill indicates a desire for it to be incorporated into the existing and future culture of the city.

Desired Uses of Meals Hill

Stakeholders ranked desired uses for Meals Hill in the following order: (1) Community access (2) Conservation (3) Education opportunities (4) Visitor access and (5) Economic. Regarding recreational desires, hiking (73%), nature viewing (69%), snow shoeing (55%), wildlife viewing (53%), and mountain biking (50%) were indicated as desired uses to be prioritized in development. Conversely, though more than 70% of stakeholders indicated that they do not currently participate in mountain biking, about 50% of stakeholders feel it should be a priority for development.

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Stakeholders value solitude and indicated a high degree of acceptability in encountering little to no other users when recreating on Meals Hill. Stakeholders were not supportive of overnight camping on the property.

Stakeholder preferences for the development of Meals Hill include the following:

- Opportunities for community recreation (e.g. Mtn. biking trails, hiking, ice climbing) 81% SI
- Opportunities to engage in nature 56% SI
- Avoiding overcrowding 31% SI
- Connectivity to other trails 31% SI
- Informative signs (wildlife, trail maps, emergency info) 25% SI
- Multi use trails 25% SI
- Connectivity to town
- Accessible opportunities (inclusivity and kid friendly options)
- Proper maintenance and cleanliness

Stakeholders also ranked park elements by importance. The following elements were noted as important by stakeholders (In order of importance):

- Trash and recycling bins
- Moderate length trails 1.5 – 3 miles
- Kid friendly options
- Allowing pets on trails
- Others indicated as important: access to waterfront, signs along trails

Stakeholders do not think overnight camping, opportunities for large groups, a parking lot or overnight camping are important in the development of Meals Hill.

Ensuring Success

Understanding stakeholders and using their input to plan, develop, and manage Meals Hill is critical to ensure the property is developed in a manner that serves the community. Stakeholders in Valdez expressed a range of environmental values. The most common values were based on experiences held in nature, the beauty of nature, and the ability to control natural environments in order to be safe and convenient for recreation. Meals Hill has the potential to support all of these values as it can provide meaningful experiences in nature and is positioned in a way that will have iconic scenic viewing opportunities. Management will have to focus on a safe and comfortable experience for recreationists to fully meet the needs and desires of stakeholders.

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

Though excited about and widely supportive of the development of Meals Hill, stakeholders indicated a range of concerns. Sustainability concerns, particularly lack of long-term plan (desire for planning in phases), maintenance costs, motorized user on property, or concerns of “modernizing Valdez” were indicated by 74% of respondents. Ecological concerns including degradation, over clearing, disturbing animal habitats, fire hazards, human wildlife interactions were indicated by 48% of stakeholder respondents. Finally, user concerns including trash, crowding, taboo rec, dog waste were indicated by 34% of respondents.

Challenges that stakeholders face in pursuing nature-based recreational activities are also critical to consider in the planning and management of Meals Hill. A lack of recreation opportunities (e.g. mountain biking trails, loop trails, trails accessing alpine, kayak launches, wildlife viewing areas; 9%), accessibility (e.g. physical ability required, uneven terrain, availability of places to rest; 7%), and poor maintenance (e.g. drainage issues, over-growth, damage from motorized users; 7%) were the most frequently indicated challenges.

Visitors to Valdez will also play a role in the success of Meals Hill and the benefits it can provide to the city as a whole. Visitors indicated that their main motivations for visiting Valdez included seeing natural scenery (67%), seeing wildlife (55%), and opportunities to recreate in nature (51%). Because Meals Hill meets all of these, it has the potential to make Valdez an even more desirable destination for visitors.

Influential elements that would encourage visitors to participate in nature-based recreation once in Valdez include (In order of influence):

- Opportunities for scenic views
- Easy access to trails
- Chance of seeing wildlife
- Quick recreational opportunities (3 hours or less)
- Clear signage directing visitors

Meals Hill is a unique opportunity in that it can provide all of the listed influential elements. Its proximity to town will make it an accessible and available opportunity to visitors and its opportunities for potential wildlife viewing and scenic views will undoubtedly attract visitors to Valdez. The most common barriers and challenges indicated by visitors were transportation, information, and time restrictions. The location of Meals Hill will allow it to be easily accessible to visitors, well known, and an experience they can engage in with limited amounts of time.

Planning and Management Implications

Meals Hill has the potential to be developed in a manner that serves all stakeholders. Thoughtful and strategic planning and management are critical to ensuring its success. The results presented in this report should guide the planning process, development and management of Meals Hill. Based on the information gained from stakeholder and visitor input, the following planning and management implications should be considered:

Planning Implications

- Meals Hill is significant to its stakeholders because of its potential to be an icon in Valdez and to shape the public image of the city. Its proximity to town and astounding beauty are rare, even in scenic and iconic Alaskan destinations. Planning of the site must ensure that it will serve as a source of community pride by showcasing views and ensuring easy access from town for all users.
- Some community members are not aware of, or do not have adequate information explaining, the conservation easement in place that will limit development of Meals Hill. Therefore, there are community members who have a vision of Meals Hill that is not possible (e.g., residential development, high end hotel development). Strategic communication should be initiated in the community to make information regarding the conservation easement and development restrictions available to more community members. Additionally, interpretive information should be available on site to explain conservation goals and restrictions to development and activities.
- Results indicated a low tolerance for crowding and a desire for solitude. Combined with high predicted use, these results indicate a need for several “peak experiences” rather than one summit on Meals Hill. Trails should be designed to showcase the beauty of the area and each option should include an opportunity for scenic views. The design of trails should not lead to one “peak experience”, rather multiple opportunities for novel experiences should be available to disperse visitors and protect opportunities for solitude.
- Stakeholders indicated that they want a natural experience while recreating at Meals Hill but that trails should be well maintained. Planning should design for natural trails ideal for upkeep and maintenance.

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020

- Planning and development of Meals Hill **should**:
 - Include opportunities for scenic views
 - Prioritize moderate length trails (1.5-3 miles)
 - Allow pets
 - Prioritize family friendly recreational experiences (considerations should be given to degree of difficulty, accessibility (all ages and ability levels, strollers, etc.), incorporate areas for breaks or activities (avoid narrow trails with few stopping points))
- Planning and development of Meals Hill **should not**:
 - Prioritize opportunities for overnight camping
 - Prioritize development of a parking lot
 - Prioritize planning for large groups
- Different user groups hold unique preferences in regards to trail length and other important park characteristics. Development should consider these diverse preferences.
- Accessibility should be considered in planning and development of Meals Hill. Considerations for inclusivity should be integrated while planning rather than later during the management process. These trails should include hard-packed and level terrain. A trail experience that is accessible to all and includes an opportunity for a scenic view should be designed.
- Visitors value a chance to see wildlife in their choice of recreational activities. Signs that inform visitors of native wildlife in the area can increase excitement and desire to recreate at Meals Hill.
- Stakeholders' responses were analyzed in numerous ways (e.g. data separated by age, gender, years of residency, frequency of trail use, among others). While unique preferences and desired uses for certain groups were identified, no significant differences were identified between stakeholders born in Valdez and those who relocated to Valdez for alternative reasons (e.g. employment, outdoor recreation, education, etc.).

Management Implications

- Results from stakeholder and visitor surveys predict very high use of Meals Hill once developed. This is due to its location (both proximity to town and water) and the scenic views it provides which were identified as contributing factors to selection of recreation areas by stakeholders. Further, Meals Hill stakeholders value the natural environment because of the experiences it provides and its beauty. Meals Hill will fit the value systems of its stakeholders provided it is maintained and conserved.
- Mineral Creek was indicated as the most used trail system in Valdez due to its ability to meet recreational needs and its proximity to residents and stakeholders. Meals Hill has the potential to also meet these needs and could therefore lower use of Mineral Creek by dispersing recreational use of visitors between the two trail systems.
- When considering use of trails, results from this study predict potential for conflicts between user groups particularly for use of trails. To address this, management teams may consider designated times or days for prioritization of particular activities. For example, Thursday and Friday from 12-4pm could be identified as mountain bike priority times where hikers can expect more mountain bike use and may choose to avoid hiking.
- Trail etiquette was indicated as a concern and, if not addressed, could lead to dissatisfaction with recreational experiences at Meals Hill. Management should include frequent inspections by park staff to ensure trail etiquette expectations are being adhered to and interventions (education, announcements, signs, etc.) should be implemented to quickly address issues that may occur as use increases over time.
- Visitors indicated a lack of information as a barrier to participation in nature-based recreation. Therefore, the city should focus on marketing opportunities to recreate at Meals Hill through visitor organizations. Further, clear signage including distances or time commitments will make activities more accessible to visitors or those new to the property.
- As use of Meals Hill increases, follow up data collection should be conducted to ensure that the property is meeting needs and expectations of stakeholders. Follow up research should be conducted at minimum 5 year intervals to ensure changes, needs, and preference are identified and met by the management team.

Appendix

Commissioning Human Capacity MH 2020



Valued stakeholders of Valdez,

The City of Valdez is kicking off the Meals Hill Master Plan project and we would like to invite you to be part of the process.

Meals Hill is 184 acres of city property located near the Valdez Ferry Terminal that is permanently protected by a conservation easement. The Meals Hill property is a significant landmark with environmentally diverse habitat, and it has the potential to be a recreational destination for the City of Valdez. The City of Valdez Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Department is beginning a master planning process to guide future development of this site.

We hope you take a few minutes to complete the following survey. Your feedback and insight will help ensure future development of Meals Hill reflects the community's vision and values. This survey will allow the voices of the community to give direction to decision makers about the significance of Meals Hill to ensure long-term benefits for Valdez, and we are excited to hear your input about this valuable asset in our community.

This is an anonymous survey. You will not be asked to identify yourself. All information collected will be utilized in guiding the successful development of Meals Hill as a recreational destination. If you would like to be entered for the random drawing for one of ten \$50 Visa gift cards, please: 1) provide your name and contact information below; and, 2) remove this page and submit it separately. This information is intentionally separated from the current survey to protect your identity. Completed surveys and removable title pages should be submitted at the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department main office located in the Valdez Civic Center. Our office is open Monday – Friday 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. If you have any questions about this survey or your participation in it, please contact me.

I am excited to see our community embrace this opportunity and am eager to hear your vision for the development of Meals Hill as our newest recreational area in the beautiful City of Valdez, Alaska!

Sincerely,

Nicholas Farline

Nicholas Farline, M.S., CPRE
Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Director
O: (907) 835-2531 M: (907) 202- 0014
nfarline@valdezak.gov



**MEALS HILL
MASTER PLAN**
Valdez, Alaska

This page intentionally left blank